# Welcome to the Interpretation Toolkit!

'Abandoned waterways and their associated ruins are the relics of the industrial revolution when thousands of miles of canals were built to transport goods and raw materials around the country. The interpretation of this fascinating and important heritage will open up a new world of waterways to the uninitiated to learn from and enjoy.'

Elizabeth Thomson (heritage advisor, Canal & River Trust)
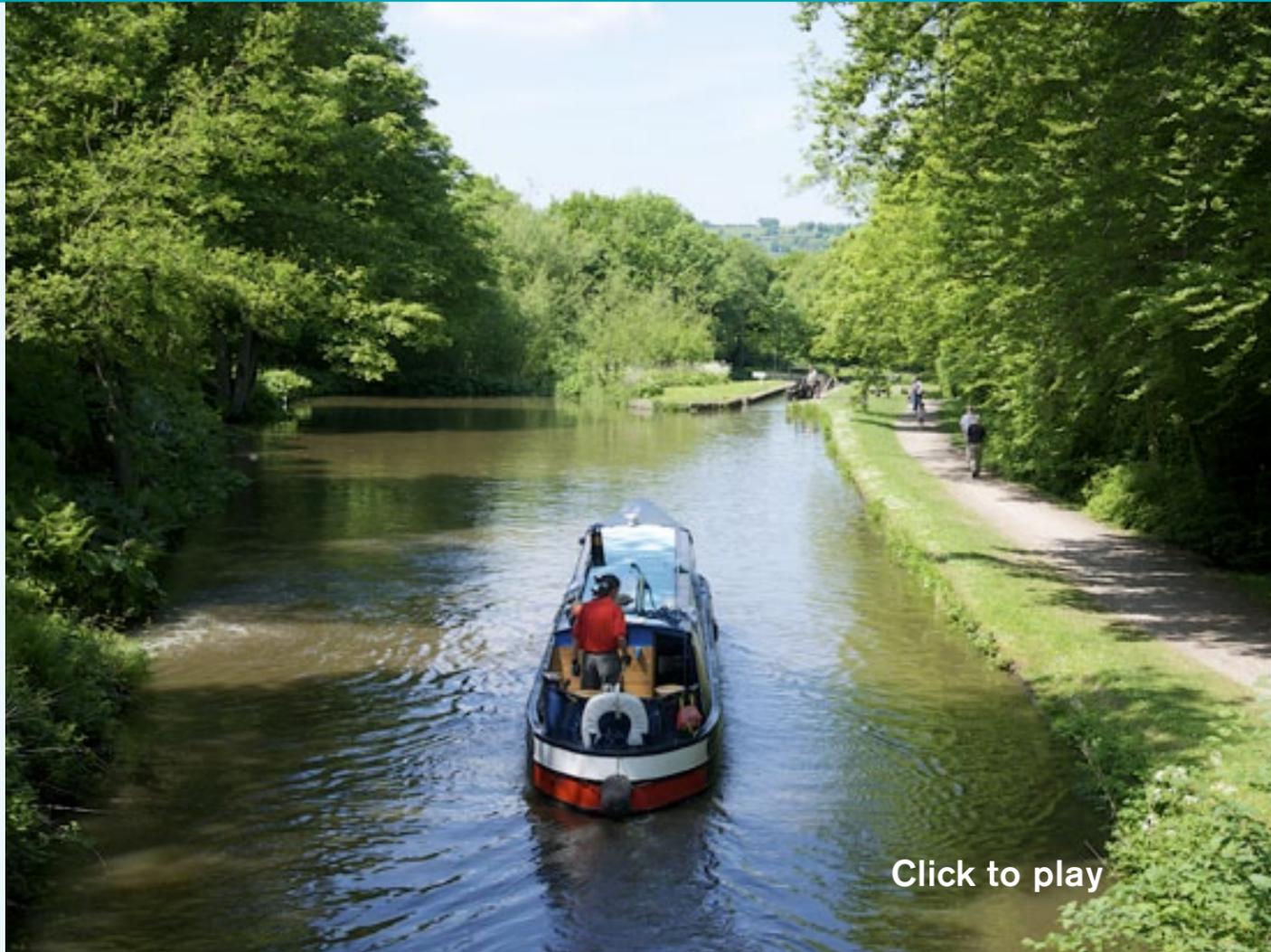
Click to play

Restoration of our inland waterways is not just about the water: It's about our heritage; conserving it and helping people make sense of it and shaping how it affects our future. Interpretation is something you can do now and reap benefits from instantly, as well as helping you towards your goal of restoring your waterway.

Abandoned waterways can help you to tell the story of your waterway in a way which will engage visitors. Effective interpretation can help with: protecting the route, growing community support, promoting your wider cause, reaching new audiences, invigorating your volunteers, assisting in funding applications, and contributing something positive to the local area.

You will find sections on different interpretative methods. There is help on project planning, targeting audiences, and commissioning interpretation, and importantly evaluation. A number of interpretation case studies have been provided, as well as links to useful websites.

Watch our video to find out more about the power of interpretation.

Explore the different types of interpretation shown on this page by selecting a section. You will then find information on that media as well as case studies to demonstrate how it can be used.

Audio Tours

Audio tours can guide people around your waterway without intruding on the natural surroundings. Producing an audio tour is an opportunity to be creative and to produce an evocative experience for the audience with the possibility of using personal testimony, sound effects and music.

Strengths

- Uses two senses (hearing and sight)
- Can help with visitor flow and direction.
- Flexible - can address intellectual access.
- Encourages visitors to look and listen at the same time.

Weaknesses

- Not easy for the visitor to interact with others in their party.
- Some people do not like them.
- Not easy (or cheap) to produce or update.

Audience

- Day and staying visitors.
- Special interest visitors.
- Visitors with special needs.

Costings

- For rough guidance see page 11 of the HLF Interpretation document **here.**

Planning

- Decide on your target audience and what you want them to get out of the tour. **Click here** to find out more.

- Will your audio tour have a theme?

- Consider the type of audio tour device you will use: Handsets, downloadable file or QR code. You will also need to consider the format that the files will be recorded in.

Research

- Establish what you already know.

- What are the key messages you want people to take away with them?

- Focus on interesting stories.

- Do you want to carry out an oral history project? People's views and stories can then be part of your audio. The Oral History Society website provides guidance: **http://www.oralhistory.org.uk/**

Audio Tours

Content

The route
- Decide from your research what features you want to include in the tour and how you can link this to interesting stories and facts.

- Consider how you can use the fact that small groups will be doing this tour - families, couples and individuals. With this in mind can you take them to places that perhaps they cannot access on the guided tour due to lack of space or access problems?

- Guidance on length is around 90 seconds and no longer than 2 minutes for each stop. Depending on the type of system you could provide the listener with the option to hear more.

- Source points must be well placed and easy to identify.

Adding interest
- How can you make this as engaging as possible? Extracts of people discussing their memories, experts sharing their insight, sound effects and music can all be good additions.

- Try and surprise people.

- The audio script should be written as if you are talking directly to the audience. Engage them through asking questions. **Click here** to find out more.

- Remember that audio narration should sound natural and not as if reading from a script.

- The tour needs to be descriptive and paint an image.

- The script needs to be simple as visitors will get one chance to understand the point you are making so avoid using jargon, and explain specialist language.

Evaluate and Celebrate

- Simple surveys.

- Can further publicity be gained from the event.

- **Click here** to find our more about evaluation.

Peak District: Moors for the Future Partnership

The Peak District National Park is a dramatic landscape of moorlands which walkers visit in thousands each year. In 2006 to complement the already successful guided walks (organised by Peak District National Park rangers) a series of audio trails were released on the website.

Audio trails were chosen because they provide interactive, up-to-date content which is essential to interacting with a wide audience. The success of this project has been recognised externally when in 2006 an award from the CPRE for countryside design awards was received. The trails combine the use of current technology and the learning experience of guided walks to offer an effective and personalised learning experience. The trails are aimed at visitors who wish to take a walk through the Peak District and South Pennine landscapes and learn some interesting facts along the way, catering for a range of abilities and interests, ranging from gentle strolls to more challenging walks in moorland wilderness.

The aim is to reach as many visitors to the moorlands as possible so they can understand what, why and how this internationally important habitat is being restored. Successful marketing has helped the project to reach new audiences. Leaflets for the trails are available in Peak District Visitor centres and are promoted on the Peak District National Park website. Also, media interest in the trails in magazines such as Derbyshire Life, local radio and outdoor websites like Grough, has helped to get the word out- which is crucial in ensuring the success of a project.

http://www.moorsforthefuture.org.uk/audio-trails

'Since the launch of the first trails in Easter 2006 they have been consistently popular, attracting regular downloads from our website'.

Debra Wilson
(MoorLIFE Communications Officer)

Live Interpretation

Live interpretation can be one of the most exciting ways to bring a site to life and for our purposes includes performance and costumed interpretation. The history of a site can be brought to life through re-creating traditional crafts or running horse and carriage trips for instance.

Strengths

- Provides an exciting fun and memorable experience.
- Can bring out a true sense of place by introducing folk law and legend.
- Can be multi - sensory and accessible to all.

Weaknesses

- Site needs to be capable of accommodating performers and audience.
- Input from professionals; individuals or companies.
- Admission charges may deter some visitors.

Audience

- Day and staying visitors.
- Children and teenagers.
- Education visitors if appropriately themed.

Costings

- This can be expensive as costs can include administration, marketing, staff costs and costume.

Planning

- Decide on your target audience and the purpose of the interpretation. **Click here** to find out more.

- Will the audience be in role or not?

- What story are you going to tell through live interpretation?

- Are you focusing on an event or the life of a character?

- Is this an activity you will do regularly?

- Will you use first or third person? First person can be more difficult as the person must stay in role throughout, but can be really effective if done well. In third person the person will be in costume but not playing a role.

- What is your budget? You may need money to spend on resources, costumes, marketing, training costs and perhaps a live interpretation company.

Live Interpretation

Research

- What stories do you want to tell?

- Establish what you already know.

- Do you have access to any artefacts that you can use in this interpretation?

Develop content & experience

You will need to consider the following

- The content needs to be factually relevant to the site.

- Will the person be playing an imaginary character or a real person?

- Will the performance take place in one setting or will the group move around the site?

- Will you provide resources as part on the day?

- Will you do activities?

- Having a quality interpreter/s is vital so that the visitors get a real and accurate sense of place. With this in mind will a volunteer do this is or will you seek professional input?

- Whether you have one costumed character talking to the public on site for the day or you are staging a recreation of an event - for example, a historic boat being pulled by horse - it all needs to be as engaging as possible.

- Depending on the type of interpretation consider how you can involve the audience - can you bring along props/authentic objects that the audience can handle?
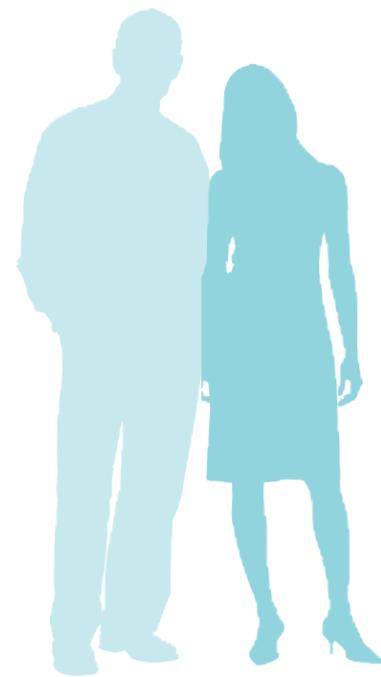
Live Interpretation

Pre-open

Organisation If a professional group is carrying out the work then you can expect them to be fully briefed. If a volunteer is doing the interpretation then they need to be fully briefed either in the role they are playing or in the information you would like them to get across.

Marketing If nobody knows about your event then no-one will show up so get the message out there: word of mouth, social media, posters, local press.

Open

On the day ensure that the performer/s are there in plenty of time so that any set props can be cleared and everyone is ready to welcome the visitors.

- Health and Safety considerations.
  Click here to view general Risk Assessment.

- Record through taking photos which can then be used in follow up publicity. You could submit some to a local paper for instance. For advice on acquiring photo permission please see the Canal & River Trust photo permission guidelines. **Click here** to find out more.

Evaluate and Celebrate

- Live interpretation is as much about people enjoying themselves as well as what they actually learn. Therefore short face to face surveys on the day can be a good way to measure how the visitors felt about the event.

- Publicise the success of the event, in the same way that you initially advertised.

- Record visitor numbers.

- Give opportunity for visitor feedback/comments.

- Is it worth holding the activity again?

- It is difficult to measure learning, but for more information visit our evaluation section **Click here.**

The Jane Austen Centre

If you visit the Jane Austen Centre in Bath you will be transported back to the 19th century and have the opportunity to meet some of Austen's most loved characters such as Elizabeth Bennet and Elinor Dashwood.

The staff have been wearing Regency costume for several years, and the introduction of Centre 'characters' from Austen novels was implemented in early 2014. The staff play characters from Austen's novels, an idea which came about as it was believed that if visitors could meet their favourite characters this would add to the excitement of the visit. It was also felt that the involvement of costumed interpretation would add to the authentic Regency atmosphere, and so enhance the experience for visitors.

Visitors really enjoy the atmosphere, with most visitor feedback mentioning the staff, and their costumes. In fact, many visitors request a photo with the staff! Eleanor recommends that all members who are taking part in any costumed interpretation are aware of the purpose behind it, so that they can perform their role as effectively as possible.

http://www.janeausten.co.uk/the-jane-austen-centre/exhibition/

'Our exhibition features an area in which our visitors can try on Regency dressing up and this has always proven to be one of the most popular parts for visitors'.

Eleanor Roberts
(General Manager)

Posters

Posters

Posters can be used to get people interested in your project, or to interpret a certain feature. They are cheap to produce and can be very effective if they are designed well. You could include QR codes to enhance your interpretation offer.

Strengths
- Use of dramatic imagery can generate a strong sense of place.
- Posters can be displayed in different places to reach many different audiences.

Weaknesses
- May need to constantly encourage outlets to display them.
- Posters can be prone to vandalism.
- Posters may need to be updated and refreshed regularly.

Audience
- All market segments.

Costings
- Cost of printing/laminating minimal
- Potential small fee to display posters.

Planning

- What do you want to achieve?

- Where will you display the posters?

- Discussions with outlets - you may need to pay a small fee.

Content & presentation

- Use maps/bullet points.

- Use images.

- Including directions will encourage people to visit.

- Laminate your poster.

Get your posters out there

- Tourist information.

- Local B&Bs/hotels/pubs.

- Other attractions.

Guided Walks/Cycle Rides

Guided walks are a great way to show off the structural/ heritage highlights of your restoration project. As you are engaging with the visitors directly you can ensure a good first experience and encourage them to return.

Strengths
- Face to face interpretation for groups.
- Leader can set level to suit audience.
- Sense of place with immediacy.

Weaknesses
- Totally reliant on quality of trained guides, their knowledge and ability to communicate.
- Party size critical (15) to maintain effective communication.

Audience
- Day/staying visitors.
- Specialists.
- Local people.
- Education visitors.
- Young people.
- People with a disability.

Costings
- The costs for running guided walks will be minimal particularly if you are doing this yourselves.

Planning

- Decide on your target audience and The purpose of the interpretation. Will your audio tour have a theme? **Click here** to find out more.

- Select tour leaders: Who will lead the walk - an existing volunteer or will you recruit a specialist volunteer, or even employ someone? You will need to consider training needs as the success of your walk will depend on the person leading it.

- It is important that whoever leads the tour can engage effectively with a wide range of people.

- In addition to a main leader it is a good idea to have at least two and preferably a handful of people who are happy to lead the tour.

Research

- What are the key messages you want people to take away from the walk/cycle ride? These can form the base of your script.

- Supporting resources: consider creating a map, or leaflet version of the walk. This can support what you are saying and may encourage visitors to return.

- Make sure you publicise your society on any documentation you produce.

Guided Walks/Cycle rides

Route & content

- A guided walk cycle route should preferably be a circular route.

- Is the ground suitable for a cycle ride?

- Is it suitable for all abilities and ages? Some routes may be, others may not.

- Length of guided walk/bicycle ride? Unlike a trail the guided walk cannot be too long, as you will have people of mixed abilities.

- What do you want the participants to see on the tour and how can you link these points of interest together?

- Will there be a theme to your walk?

- Plan your walk so that it takes into account physical terrain. In other words it might be a good idea to have a stop point after an uphill section.

- Health and Safety considerations. **Click here** to view general Risk Assessment.

Taking your walk to the next level!
Once you have a route in mind think about how you can make this as interesting as possible. This is particularly important if you are designing the walk for families and school groups. The idea is that all the below are discreet and so do not distract from the natural landscape.

- What about having characters that people can look for on the route?

- Another idea is hiding 'treasures' for children to spot/collect, or a quiz to complete on the walk.

- Geocaching possibilities:
  https://www.geocaching.com/play

- Adding points of interest e.g. wooden sculptures.

Guided Walks/Cycle Rides

Pre-Launch

- Run through: Once you have decided on a provisional route for the walk, it is a good idea to walk this with a friend to get a fresh perspective.

- You will be responsible for the health and safety of the people on the walk. Part of managing risk is to prepare a Risk Assessment to help you to pre-empt and reduce or eradicate risks where possible. If you are doing a walk once or twice a month it is advisable to walk the route before the walk with the public. Something might have changed on route or something may have become dangerous or inaccessible.

- Be prepared to answer visitor questions.

- Getting the word out: Publicise the event, put up posters near where the walk will take place. Include the following information: when, where, time place, directions, duration and contact number for the leader. Include any special requirements e.g. advisable footwear.

- Have leaflets ready to give out; you have a captive audience so use this opportunity to get the word out further. Do you have a self-led trail they might want to try next or a project open day to encourage further involvement?

- It is a good idea to have in mind potential problems on the walk and warn people before you start - steep hills, difficult terrain, what type of terrain they can expect.

- Know the duration of your walk.

- Wear a badge or sweatshirt with the name of your organisation to make yourself more visible.

- Keep a record: It can be useful to take photos. You could submit some to a local paper for instance. For advice on acquiring photo permission see the Canal & River Trust photo permission guidelines **Click here.**

Before the opening

- Work out what your costs will be to put on the walk/ride.

- Decide whether you will charge or ask for a donation.

- Is there a maximum number of people you can take with you safely?

- Write a risk assessment. **Click here** for an example.

- Will you take bookings or will people just turn up? If you are organising this primarily through advanced booking - who will handle this?

- If the group is 20 or over you then you should aim to have a leader and someone at the back of the group to keep everyone together.

- Decide how often the walk can run - you can always increase or decrease this as you need to. You could start with twice a month.

Guided Walks/Cycle Rides

Evaluate and Celebrate

- Surveys

- Count visitor numbers (easy if you are using a booking system)

- Can further publicity be gained from the event?

- You could consider writing up your guided walk and producing a leaflet. This means that visitors can do the walk on their own.

- For more information, please view the evaluation section **here.**
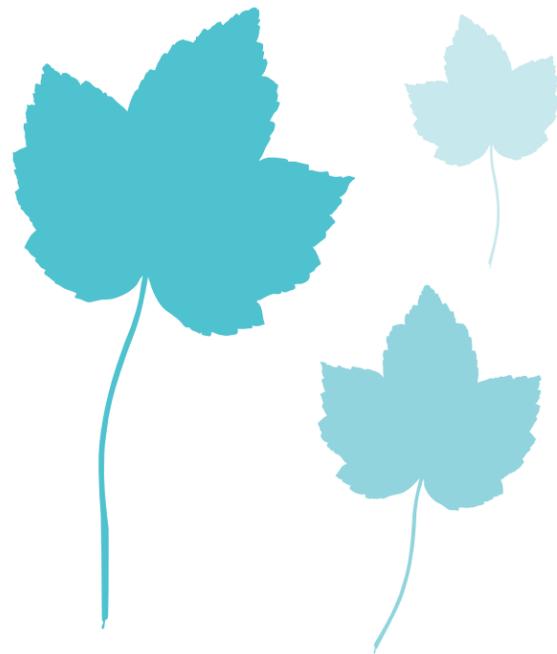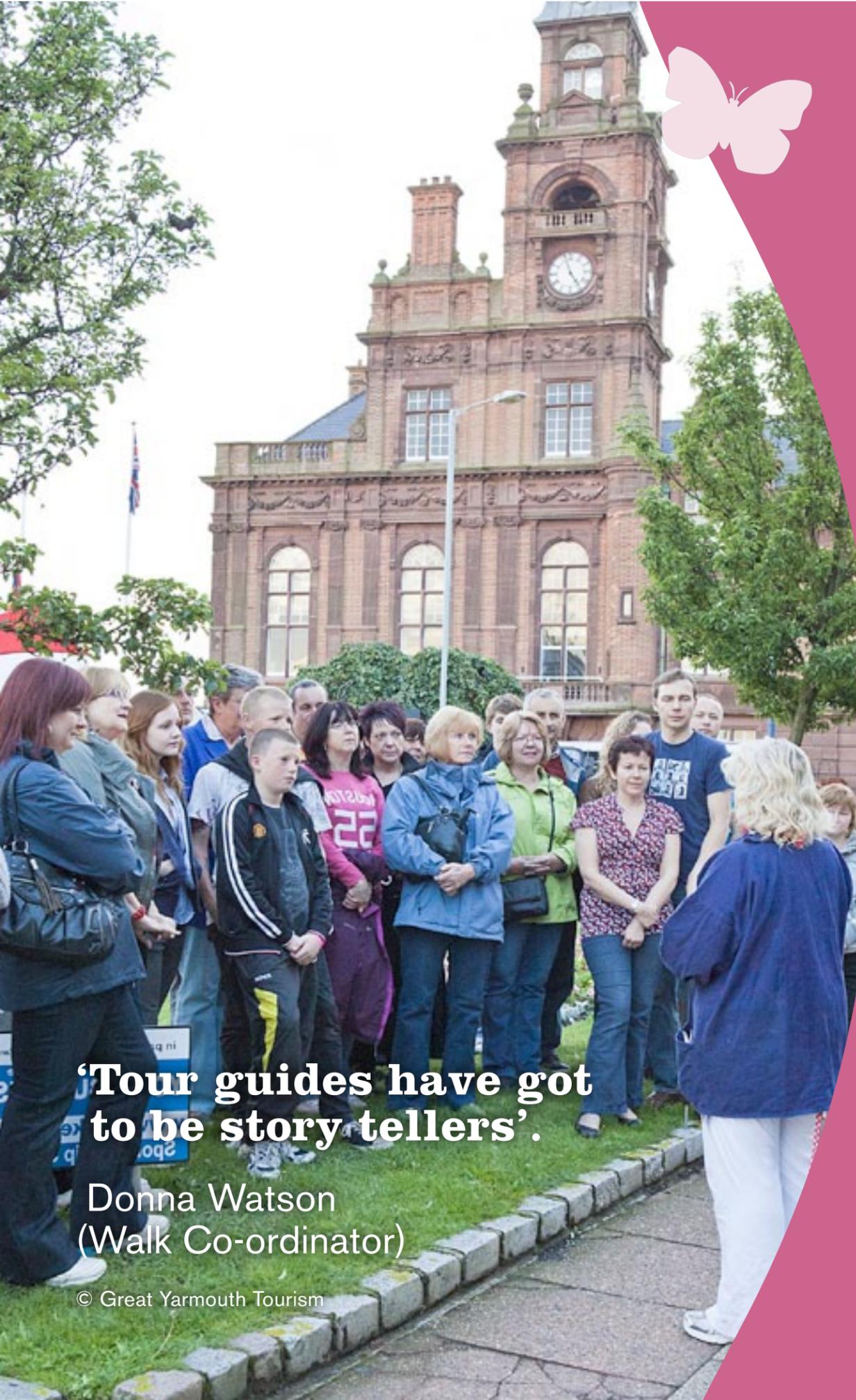
Great Yarmouth

If you are a visitor to Great Yarmouth, you have the opportunity to explore the rich heritage of this town by taking a guided walk. The walks came into fruition when in 1996 the Great Yarmouth Council strategy included a vision to create a team of official local guides.

Work then began on gathering interested individuals who trained to become officially qualified tour guides. The guides still work closely with the Borough Council who cover the insurance costs. Since the tours began in 1996 they have proven to be popular with new guides currently being trained. The tours are organised and led entirely by volunteers, who bring the history of the town to life for visitors. Over the years the volunteers have experimented with different times and have now found a successful combination, which includes regular walks, and special seasonal walks the details of which are available on the website listed below. Visitors do not need to book to go on a walk, which removes a potential barrier.

The tours are advertised through the website, weekly newspapers and the 'What's on brochure'. Attendance does vary, but the number of participants can be as high as 25. The walks have proven to be a successful way to interpret the town, with the guides giving out questionnaires at the end of each session, the feedback to which is positive. To make guided walks a success it is important to find the right people who can engage with the public, which is something Donna feels they have achieved in Great Yarmouth.

http://www.great-yarmouth.co.uk/whats-on/guided-heritage-walks.aspx

http://mediafiles.thedms.co.uk/Publication/EE-GYar/cms/pdf/Heritage%20Guided%20Walks_2014_FINAL.pdf

'Tour guides have got to be story tellers'.

Donna Watson
(Walk Co-ordinator)

© Great Yarmouth Tourism

Interpretive Panels

Telling the story of a site using interpretive panels ensures that visitors whenever they visit the area have access to this information, so this might make panels a desirable choice. It is worth remembering that panels do require maintenance which can lead to further costs. Panels also need to be carefully cited so that they do not encroach on the site itself, so careful consideration is needed before opting for panels.

For more information on interpretation panels **Click here.**

Strengths

- A strength of interpretive panels is that they are accessible at all times and available to all visitors.
- Panels also encourage visitors to stop and look.

Weaknesses

- Panels can be intrusive if they are not carefully positioned.
- May require planning consent.
- Vulnerable to vandalism and fading.
- Panels need to be maintained, so that they can be read and do not look unsightly.

Audience

- Day and staying visitors.
- Local people.
- Family groups.
- Education visitors.
- Special needs visitors.

Costings

- Please see page 9 of the HLF Interpretation Guidelines **Click here.**
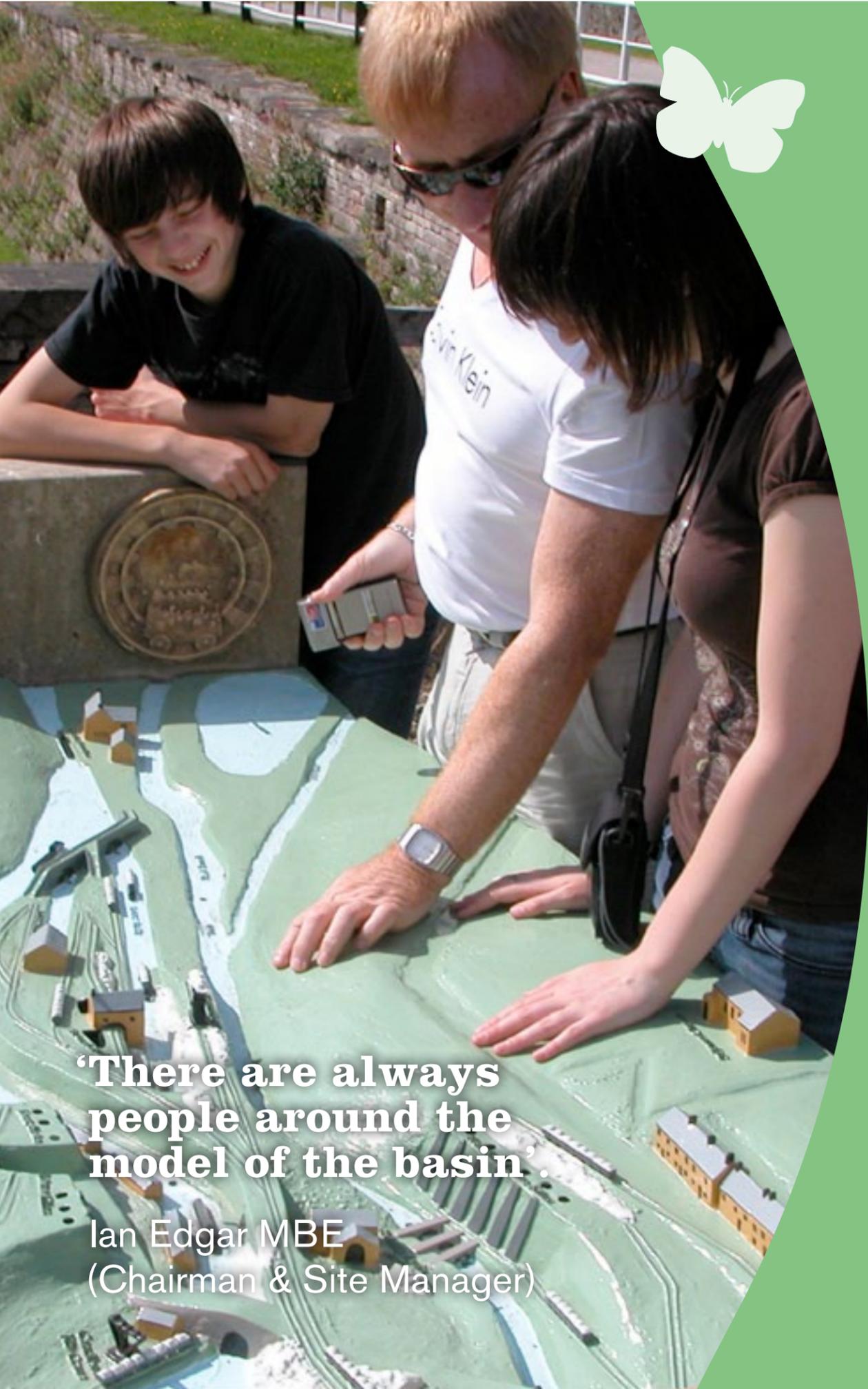
Bugsworth Basin

Bugsworth Basin in the Peak District is the only remaining canal/tramway interchange in the UK and is a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

Bugsworth Basin Heritage Trust found that visitors to the site were very curious. This obvious public interest led to the introduction of a range of interpretation including a 3D model, a detailed model, interpretation panels and a complimentary leaflet. The Trust are also working towards creating a permanent exhibition space.

There are numerous interpretation panels dotted around the site at points of interest, with a complimentary leaflet linking the panels together to tell the story of the site. The panels are made from cast aluminium or, in the case of ground mounted panels, cast phosphor bronze all with raised text and illustration as appropriate.

The site originally had panels made of laminated fibre glass which looked great initially, but as they are not waterproof and the water seeped through it made the panel unsightly and unreadable and meant that replacement panels were needed. It is really important to consider the maintenance of your panels and to look at the pro and cons of which material is chosen beforehand. The interpretation has been very successful at Bugsworth Basin. Part of this is down to effective marketing through making leaflets available in the local pubs, libraries, Tourist Information Offices or Centres, and the local museum. According to pedestrian counters 55,000 visitors explore the basins each year.

http://www.brocross.com/iwps/

'There are always people around the model of the basin'.

Ian Edgar MBE
(Chairman & Site Manager)

Exhibitions

Exhibitions can really help to set your waterway up as a tourist destination. If you do not have a building you can use as an exhibition space then roadshows can be a great way to get the word out to a wider audience: touring exhibits need to be practical, durable and engaging.

Planning

- Decide who the audience is and what the purpose is of the exhibition. **Click here** to find out more.

- Where do you intend to visit with your touring exhibition? - Is there a demand? Schools, local fairs, boat festivals?

- If you are intending to host an exhibition on site, is the space you have in mind practical?

- Consider in your planning that permanent exhibitions need to be considered carefully, so it might be worth hiring in professional help.

- What form will your exhibition take - pull ups, A frames, posters?

Strengths

- Exhibitions are an opportunity to present the complete story.
- Comfortable surroundings for visitors to learn at their leisure.
- Existing visitor facilities can be used or a new built venue.
- Relatively cheap to produce and update
- The local community can be involved as face to face volunteers.
- It is possible to include interactive elements.

Weaknesses

- Requires a building or accommodation.
- Requires a management structure, staffing, cleaning etc.
- Ideally a business plan for long term viability should be produced.
- It can be time consuming to arrange venues, deliver and set up.
- A robust display is necessary.

Audience

- Exhibitions can appeal to a broad range of visitors.

Costings

- For rough guidance see page 11 of the HLF Interpretation document **Click here.**

Exhibitions

Research

- Pull together what you already know and any useful documents.

- Primary sources can bring an exhibition to life, so can you track down: journals, photos, objects related to your waterway/local area.

- Consider carrying out oral history research which you can then showcase in your exhibit.

- Producing an exhibition is not about just presenting facts, you need to engage with the visitors. Consider using photos, objects, dressing up box, hands on activities?

- Supporting resources: As well as using your exhibit to interpret your waterway, you can also use the exhibit to market your waterway and organisation. Take leaflets for your trail along, or an up and coming open day so that people can come to you next time, or do something extra whilst they are on site.

Canal & River Trust are developing guidance for exhibitions which will be available in due course.
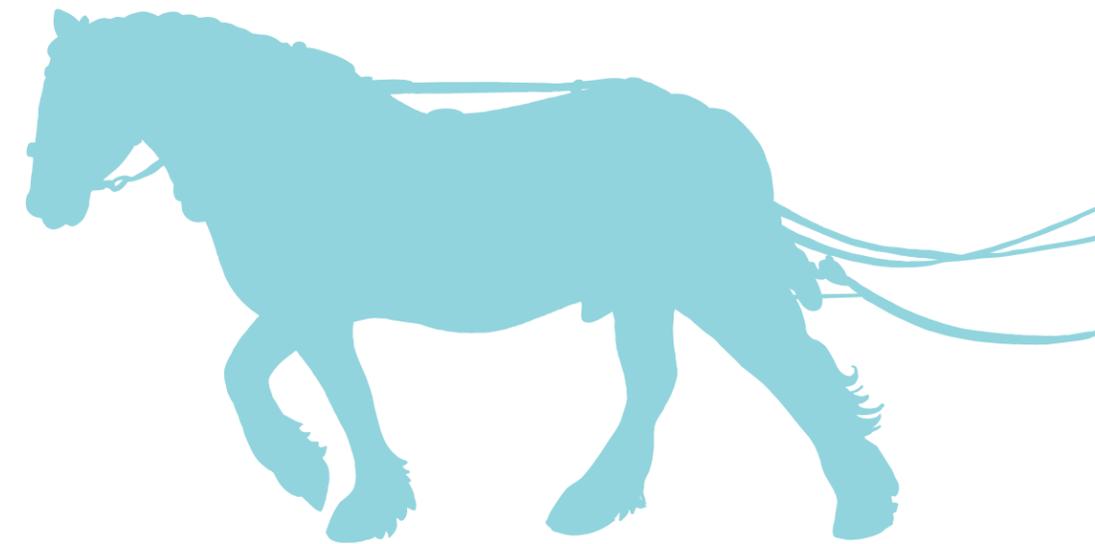
Stourport Exhibition

At Stourport Basins, visitors can explore two exhibition spaces telling the story of Stourport: the Tontine Stable and the Old Ticket Office. Volunteers were heavily involved in the restoration these spaces, doing much of the paint work and cleaning things like brasswork and leather harnesses in preparation for the exhibition.

A local Heritage Interpretation specialist was engaged to research and develop the exhibitions, establishing strong interpretive themes, illustrated with some great 'people stories'. Resources for the exhibition were gathered from many sources including The Civic Society, Bewdley Museum, English Heritage and local people. It is recommended that you develop an acquisition policy so that you know what you are looking for, otherwise you might end up storing items you can't use. Stourport is a popular holiday destination for families - thinking about your audiences is a key part of the interpretation.

One of our objectives was to incorporate interactives, which would be low maintenance and would appeal to younger people. For example, a periscope was created so that children and visitors using wheelchairs could look out of a window and see an artist's impression of how the basins would have looked in the 1790s. The exhibition was split into themes, such as Canal Town (all about the growth of Stourport after arrival of the canal) and A Place to Work (talking about people's work in town). The challenge following the opening was to support a strong, well trained, volunteer team for the future. A strong relationship with the local press has been really important to us.

http://stourporttown.co.uk/?page_id=179

'**We wanted to tell the story of Stourport-on-Severn's waterways**".

Eliza Botham
(Heritage Interpretation Project Manager)

Websites

A website is not only a platform for you to get the word out about your project, but can also be a good tool to interpret your site. Most potential visitors will look for a website before they decide to visit, and will be influenced by an interesting and importantly a user friendly website.

Strengths
- Allows pre-visit planning.
- A website provides a link between sites and facilities.
- Websites can be easily updated.

Weaknesses
- Producing a user friendly and attractive website can be a difficult task; therefore specialist help may be needed.
- To work best websites should be kept up to date, which can be time consuming.
- The two-way flow of information must be screened and monitored.

Audience
- Day and staying visitors.
- Special interest.
- Young people.
- Education and Life Long Learning.
- Special needs.

Advice on websites from Steve Wood
(Chair of Uttoxeter Canal restoration project, interpretation consultant, web and IT specialist).

Your web site is probably the most important tool you have to tell people what your project is about, what you are doing and what you want people to do for you (donate, join your work parties, attend your events etc.) Most people will look online before they turn to books or other sources for information. However, an out of date website could be worse than no website at all if it gives people the wrong impression of your project. Fortunately keeping your website up-to-date is more easily achieved today than it was just a few years ago.

Content Management Systems
The arrival of eBay then Facebook introduced non-technical people to the idea that they can create pages directly in their web browser without needing to know how it works behind the scenes. These Content Management Systems power both small and large sites and needn't cost a fortune to set up. The software is generally free (open source to be precise) and two or three days of advice from a website developer, who may even be a member of your society and able to assist for free, will set you on the right track.

Websites

By far the most popular CMS in use today is Wordpress, but many others exist including Drupal and Joomla. Some organisations use commercial CMS software to meet more complex needs, but it is unlikely that a canal society will gain any benefit from doing this. Some of the world's largest sites are built with open source software.

You will need to pay to register the name of the site and to host it on a web server (a type of computer, designed specifically to display web pages) but the total cost of name and hosting for a basic content managed site should only be in the region of £100 a year. Share the load of keeping content up to date by making different people responsible for their own sections of the site, probably connected to the role they hold within your organisation.

There is a small learning curve but it is not beyond the ability of anyone who has ever listed an item on eBay, for example. Your team of editors will then be able to work on different pages from different locations at the same time.

Contents

Once your website has been built you can expand the content areas to help people learn more about your project. Sections telling the history of both the canal and your restoration project are both important. You may decide to put studies and other documents online but make sure that you have copyright clearance of anything you publish in this way.

OS maps are one example of content that generally cannot be published online. You are telling a story to your audience much as you would in a booklet or on display boards. Remember that as well as the general public, it will be looked at by the media and by any funders you apply to, so make sure that you tell the story clearly and in an engaging way.

As time goes by you might decide to add an online shop, private members area or other useful functions but none of this is necessary to get you up and running. A CMS is designed to constantly evolve and grow as you do.

Social media

Do consider promoting your project on social media. As much as some people dislike Facebook and Twitter, the reality is that there are thousands of people already using them to talk about canal projects, and who will be interested in what you are up to. It is certainly the quickest way to announce what you are doing, so finding someone in your organisation who is happy to spend a few minutes a week posting updates will be time well spent.

Waterway Recovery Group volunteers in particular are very active on Facebook and love it when you post lots of photos of what they have been doing on your canal! Links to your site from social media will help more people to find out what you are doing and so in turn help grow your organisation.

Multi-media

Multi-media refers to content that uses a combination of different media forms, such as audio and still images. Multi-media can be a very engaging and effective form of interpretation. Commissioning multi-media can be very expensive and professionals will need to be involved, money will also need to be spent on maintenance.

The best type of multi-media are immersive but this can be costly. The three most accessible forms are listed below:

Video: is the cheapest form of multi-media and it can be made in-house. It can be a way of getting the word out but of also interpreting your waterway.

- Anderton Boat Lift (Canal & River Trust).

- Ham House Video (National Trust).

- Consider the type of audio tour device you will use: Handsets, downloadable files. You will also need to consider the format that the files will be recorded in.

Podcasts
- Sense of place
  (Edinburgh World Heritage Site).

- Wrest Park (English Heritage).

- Liskeard's Mining Heritage.

- RSPB 'Natures Voice'.

Interactives (games)
This can be useful for reaching out to schools and new audiences, but can also be costly.

- **Hook a duck.**

Strengths
- Involves and focuses the user.
- Video footage and animated material can be more expressive.
- Database multi-media can allow access to a whole museum archive.
- 3D respresentation can bring sites and objects to life.

Weaknesses
- Development and hardware costs can be high.
- Multi-media can lead to visitor flow problems with people being concentrated in certain places.
- The content and hardware requires on-going maintenance.

Audience
- Day and staying visitors.
- Special interest.
- Young people.
- Educational visitors.
- Learning for those with special needs.

Costings
- Please see page 10 of the HLF Interpretation Guidelines **Click here.**

Dudley Canals Trust

If you visit Dudley Tunnel in the Black Country you have the option of taking a marvellous boat trip through the tunnels to discover a hidden underground world and can even have a go at legging a boat yourself!

These trips have been very successful currently attracting around 80,000 visitors every year. The trips were set up to increase public awareness of the tunnel and to raise money to fight the proposal by the British Transport Commission (forerunner of British Waterways) to close the tunnel in the early 1960s. Over the years Dudley Canal Trust have developed their interpretational offer and have found that visitors do expect interpretation and a certain level of entertainment. The latest round of interpretation updates in 2013 included the installation of a new video that made use of computer graphics to explain the geology and history of the area. Also, a simple sound and light show in another cavern was installed telling the story of how Dudley mines were formed.

Derek advises that when embarking on an interpretation project it is useful to research the history and pick on some topics of interest that are specific to the canal such as the 'business case' for building the canal, the engineering problems encountered and solved, water supply, cargoes carried, links with local industry or farming and families that worked the boats. Boat family history can be particularly attractive to visitors as it involves people, who with a bit of research can be named, their way of life described and any descendants traced. This research is ideal for involving local communities. Dudley Tunnels have been voted the best attraction in Dudley by Trip advisor and advertise using press, publications and increasingly the internet.

http://www.dudleycanaltrust.org.uk/
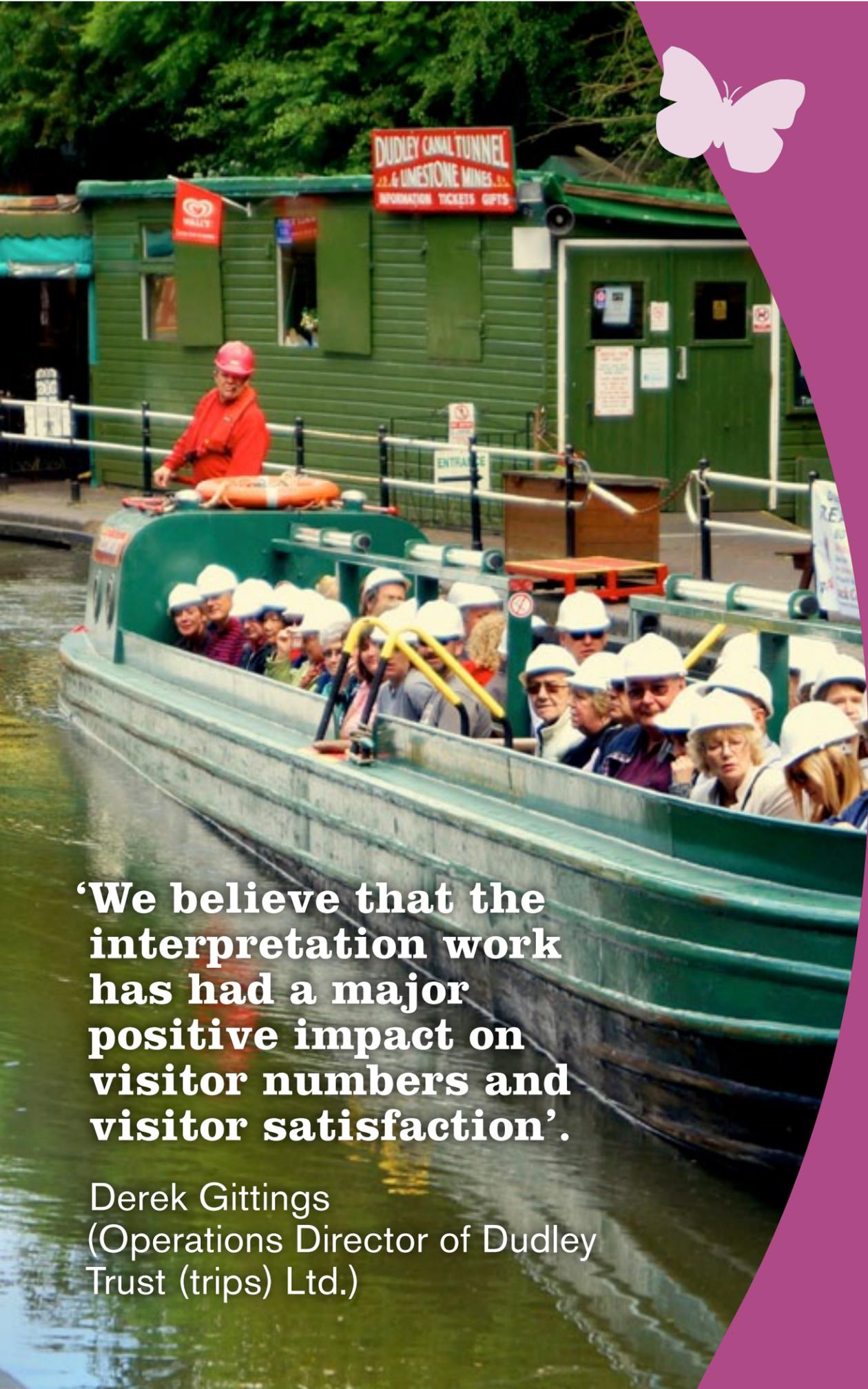
'We believe that the interpretation work has had a major positive impact on visitor numbers and visitor satisfaction'.

Derek Gittings
(Operations Director of Dudley Trust (trips) Ltd.)

Foxton Canal Museum

The remains of the Foxton Inclined Plane Lift on the Leicestershire Line of the Grand Union Canal is a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The physical remains of the lift are still visible and it is the long term ambition of Foxton Inclined Plane Trust that one day the lift will be returned to working order.

To bring the boat lift to life now, Foxton Inclined Plane Trust are developing a series of multi-media displays in Foxton Canal Museum. One display will be made up of a large screen showing the lift working. The animation will only begin though, once the boiler under the screen is filled with coal, then the boat will set off. Fun and educational additions like this will make the museum really enjoyable for visitors. There will also be a curved screen which will show an animated history of the locks and local waterways. For visitor use outside the museum, an App is being developed which will show the boat lift working and information about the locks whilst people are looking out onto the ruins.

Visitors will be able to see the boats using the old Inclined Plane, through the App. The displays are primarily aimed at families, with a balance of fun interactive elements and more in-depth information for adults. The multi-media displays in and outside the museum are being produced to raise awareness about the boat lift, to engage with visitors and to help protect the historical remains, so that in future years a full working restoration may be possible. Working effectively with a number of organisations, has been key to getting this project off the ground and in securing funding. The project is funded by the Arts Council, and numerous groups have been involved including two Local councils, Leicester Shire Promotions, and Canal & River Trust. The museum will be opened with a new name - The Boilerhouse - in 2015.
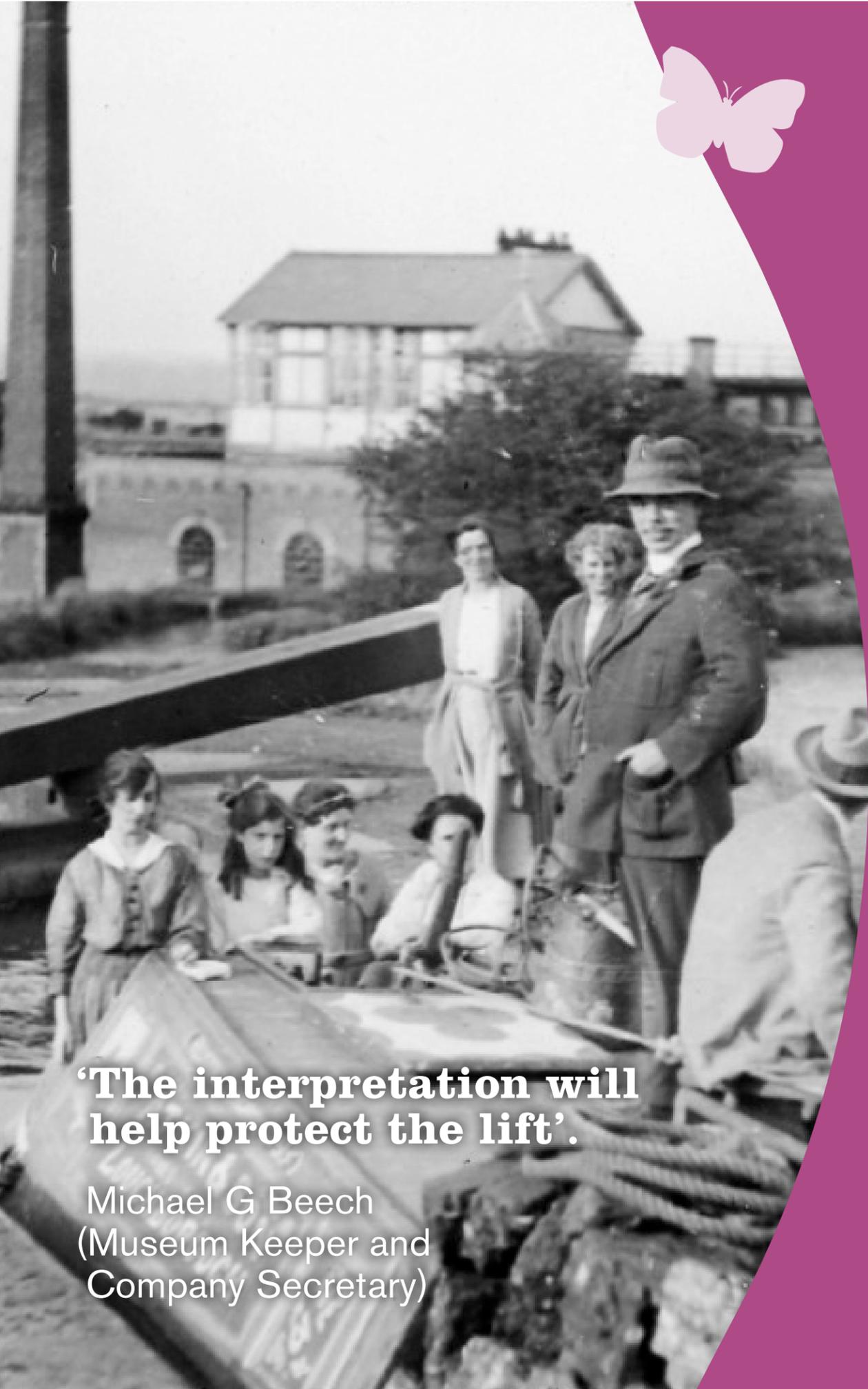
info@fipt.org.uk

'The interpretation will help protect the lift'.

Michael G Beech
(Museum Keeper and Company Secretary)

Caerleon Baths

The multi-media display at Caerleon Baths creates the effect of the baths full of water. This was created using live footage taken from a swimming pool, two digital projectors, LED lighting and audio recordings.

The effect is impressive bringing the baths to life through showing the baths as they would have appeared during the Roman period. Projected words often swirl around on the water or sometimes people appear swimming along to help to tell the stories of the baths.

Visitors can explore the baths via a walkway above. The great thing about this multi-media display is that as well as giving visitors at taste of what it would have been like here during the heyday, it has not had an impact on the physical remains and everything that has been put in place is reversible.

To accompany the multi-media display are audio posts, clips of black and white movies, interpretation boards and touch screen games. Visitors have been impressed with the display with the staff receiving good comments. The baths are attracting new visitors and the work done has re-invented the baths enticing visitors back.

http://cadw.wales.gov.uk/daysout/Caerleon-roman-fortress-baths/?lang=en

'The multi-media display has not only increased our number of new visitors but has also led to people visiting us again'.

David Penberthy
(Head of Interpretation and Learning at CADW)

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QR Codes

Many people, though not everyone, owns a smartphone, so using digital media can be an innovative and creative way to enhance your interpretation offer. QR codes (quick response) work best when they are integrated with other forms of interpretation.

Strengths
- The freedom of exploration with the opportunity to stop on route.
- New technology is more reliable and flexible.
- Accessible to people with visual impairment.
- Allows visitors to pick and choose the information they want.

Weaknesses
- Large capital outlay.
- May exclude a small number of people.
- QR codes can be temperamental. and do require network coverage.
- Technology can be quickly outdated.

Audience
- Special needs visitors- especially visually impaired and the less mobile.
- Younger audiences can be aimed at through including interactive features like games .
- Local people through oral history input.

Costings
- Please see page 11 of the HLF Interpretation Guidelines **Click here.**

Planning
- Decide on your target audience and the purpose of the interpretation **Click here** to find out more.

- Consider how a QR code trail will enhance your other forms of interpretation.

- Consider hiring a professional company to produce the trail - is this in your budget? You will also need to allow for updating and maintaining the media, webpages or waymarkers.

- Carry out research on digital media.

Research
- Even if you hire a company: you will still need to research the content.

- Consider the information you gathered while creating other interpretation: you may be able to incorporate this into your QR trail.

Canal & River Trust

The Inland Waterways Association
Keeping our waterways alive!

QR Codes

Content

- Your digital media needs to be linked to points on site where you have other interpretation (panel or trail leaflets). Visitors can then chose to access more information through digital media.

- What can you include in your digital media to make the experience really fun and interesting? Consider including: audio memoirs, video animation, photographs, maps, games or augmented reality to enliven your interpretation.

- This is an opportunity to build in more detail, but you still need to make your content user friendly. **Click here** to find out more.

- QR codes work best when they are integrated with other interpretation.

Maximising use

- So that visitors can access the trail beforehand create a section on your website from which visitors can download the trail.

- If QR codes are used then visitors need to know they have the option to do a QR trail before they arrive at your waterway, as they need to have a QR reader already installed on their phones.

- Let the visitor know what they can expect from the trail and make the benefits clear: fascinating facts, games.

- Make sure they know when they reach a point for more information - e.g. QR code on each panel.

- If your QR codes have been redeveloped after the other interpretation then launch it as you would a trail: posters, press, word of mouth.

Evaluate and Celebrate

- You need to think carefully about how you evaluate your digital media. It may be used less than your other forms of interpretation - so numbers alone may not be the best method.

- You need to think about who have downloaded the QR codes and what they have learnt.

- For more information on evaluation, visit the evaluation section **here.**

Lagan Valley Regional Park Heritage Audio Trail using QR codes

The beautiful Lagan Valley Regional Park in Northern Ireland is home to the now derelict Lagan Navigation which used to run for 27 miles between Belfast to Lough Neagh.

The navigation has been brought to life with an audio trail which takes you on a journey into the heyday of the Lagan Navigation. Listeners are transported back in time through a humorous and engaging narration which is full of local tales. In 2009 the audio trail was made available with the aim to make the history of the valley more accessible to a wide audience.

The audio trail can be accessed through downloading an audio script from the website which you can then listen to on site, or alternatively through using the accompanying QR codes which are on site. At Lagan the QR codes are incorporated into existing signage to keep the towpath clutter free.

There are a total of 35 stops, but the audio trail is organised in a way in which you can join the trail at different points. There is also an accompanying map available on the website to make the process even easier for visitors who may wish to explore a section of the trail. A leaflet of the trail and how to use it is also available locally or in PDF format on the website.

http://www.laganvalley.co.uk/audiotrails.html

'We have had good feedback from visitors who enjoy the usability of the audio trail'.

Andy Bridge (Manager)

Trails

Trails can be a nice way to show off points of interest on your waterway in a way that links them together. With this in mind it can be a great tool to tell the overall story.

Strengths

- Trails can be updated easily.
- Can be produced to suit all ages.
- Can introduce interactive elements.
- Trails encourage families to discover and learn together.

Weaknesses

- Need dry storage space.
- The written word is not accessible to all.
- Leaflets may cause a litter problem.
- Marker posts can be prone to vandalism.

Audience

- Children in family or education groups.
- Special needs visitors.
- Can be tailored to different audiences.

Costings

- Please see page 10 of the HLF Interpretation Guidelines **Click here.**

Planning

- Decide on your target audience and what you want your trail to do. Educate, entertain? **Click here** to find out more.

- If it is for families you may want to consider making this more interactive, for instance adding brass rubbings or using a character to illustrate the trail.

- Involve the community from the start by gathering a group of local people together to share ideas.

- What form will your trail take - will it be leaflet based, will you use marker posts? Will you mark the points on your trail physically or will it be purely paper based?

- Decide how people will access your trail - handed out onsite, downloadable from website, leaflet in tourist information centres.

- Will you produce the leaflet yourself or have someone create and format this for you? There will be a cost involved if you want this to be produced professionally.

- Where will you store your leaflets?

- Draw up a timeline of your project - do you have an anniversary or an open day you would like to have your trail in place for?

- Consider contacting groups who have carried out a trail, they may be able to offer advice.

Trails

Trails

Research

- Establish what you already know about your waterway (history, people involved).

- Are there any gaps in your research? If so, who will do this - recruit a specialist volunteer or a current volunteer?

- Conduct your research using a range of oral histories, libraries, archives and photos.

- Collect baseline data: How many people use the towpath/visit the waterway now? This data can support your evaluation and funding bids.

Content

- Draw up a list of key things you want to include, points included on the trail need to be as interesting as possible. Can you tell a story using different locations on your trail?

- Remember you do not always need to see the physical remains of a building to bring to life what used to be there.

- If you are creating an educational trail for schools, then you need to make sure the content links to the syllabus. There is more information on the syllabus **here.**

- You should aim for between 8 and 12 points of interest initially.

- Do you have one prominent figure associated with your stretch of waterway/local area - can you use this to drive your trail?

- When writing the text consider that short, sharp facts can be more memorable and are more likely to be read.

- Use simple language but colourful language.

- Be flexible and change your points of interest if they are not working as a whole, or you have too many.

- Will your route be linear or take people back to the starting point? Do you have any obvious starting points- a car park, good off road parking etc?

- Make your trail look attractive and eye-catching- photos, cartoons, imaginative layout.

- Proof read your text, preferably by someone who has no involvement with the project or waterways; this will help you to target any technical language.

- Please see the Canal & River Trust's guidance on accessibility for advice how to write the trail **here.**

Trails

Trial Trail

- Test the trail before launching with a few people who were not involved in creating it. They will give you feedback on what works and what does not.

- You will need to think about health and safety. **Click here** to view the general Risk Assessment.

- Publicise your event using social media, local press, word of mouth, posters.

- Why not hold an open day to launch your trail.

- Ensure you have enough leaflets to meet demand.

- Keep a record: It can be useful to take photos. You could submit some to a local paper for instance. For advice on acquiring photo permission please see the Canal & River Trust photo permission guidelines. **Click here** to find out more.

Evaluate and Celebrate

- Monitor the number of people using the trail.

- Carry out on site surveys.

- Hand out a survey form with the trail which visitors can complete.

- Organise focus groups of people who have used the trail to gain feedback.

- For more information, please view the evaluation section **here.**

Skipton Castle

If you visit the dramatic Skipton Castle in Yorkshire, on arrival you will be handed an illustrated tour sheet which contains all that is needed to unlock the history of the castle.

The tour sheet comprises of 50 grids, which guides visitors around the story of the castle. Introduced in the 1970's the trail has stood the test of time. The illustrated tour sheet which was designed on site is easily updatable. Over the years the sheet has been produced in other languages. Recently, sheets written in Chinese & Russian have been added to the collection. Another advantage to this trail is that it manages visitor flow and also helps visitors not to miss any parts of the castle.

Visitors have the choice to delve further into the history of the castle with more information provided on interpretation panels around the castle. This interpretation method has proven popular with the vast majority of visitors enjoying the interpretation.

http://www.skiptoncastle.co.uk/

Click here to view the trail worksheet
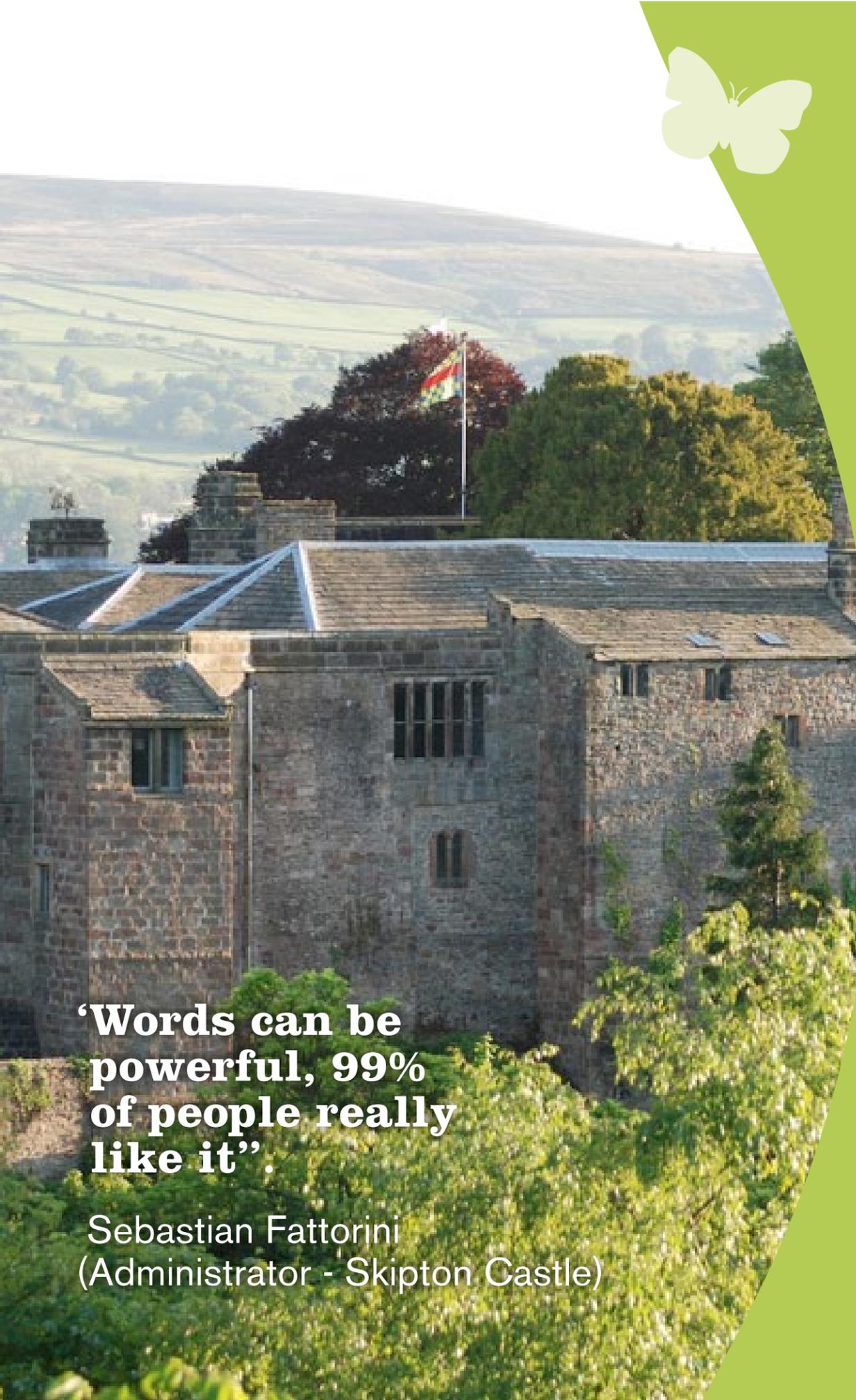
'Words can be powerful, 99% of people really like it".

Sebastian Fattorini
(Administrator - Skipton Castle)
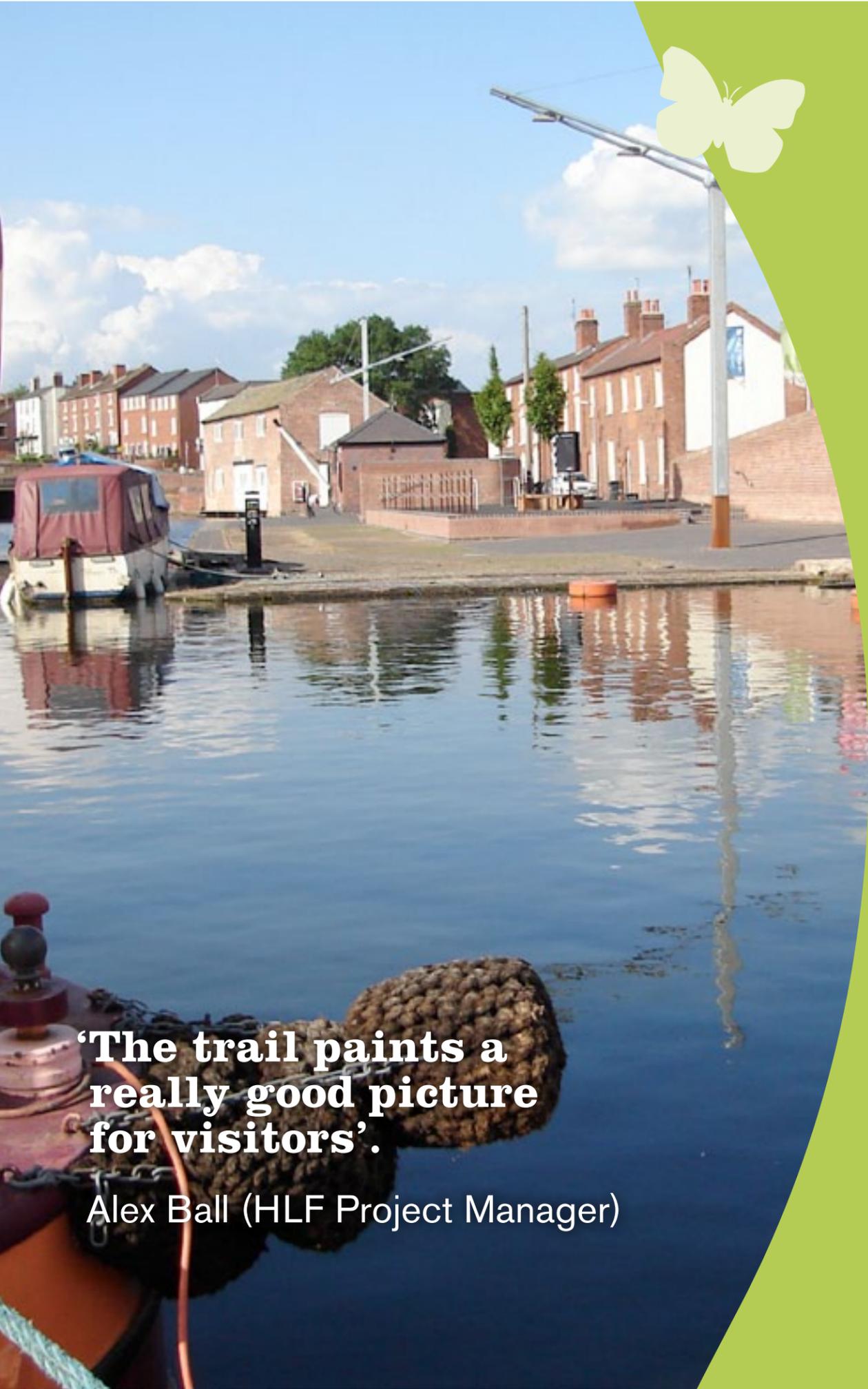
Stourport Basins Discovery Trail

The historic Stourport Basins in North Worcestershire were restored between 2005 and 2009. The project gave the buildings a face lift and restored the basins to their former glory.

One aim of the work was to engage with visitors through a range of interpretative methods, for example interpretation panels showing an 18th century etching of how the landscape would have looked. During the project a great deal of valuable information was gained on the history of the surrounding area.

Those working on the project did not want the knowledge to evaporate and so created a detailed discovery trail targeted at the enthusiast. The trail is made up of 25 points and covers the fascinating history of James Brindley's site, for which much of the information was discovered during the restoration.

The trail is readily accessible to the public and is available online so that visitors can print it off ahead of time for their visit. There are markers dotted around the site which correspond with the number on the leaflets to facilitate the trail which are noticeable but not ruining the environment, and which aim to attract visitors who were not previously aware of the trail. The interpretation was successful with an increase in visitor numbers in the years following the opening. Stourport Forward, a group who contributed to the restoration project, remains on site organising events and leases the Windlass café. Stourport Basins remains a popular destination amongst boaters and tourists alike, since the restoration.

http://stourporttown.co.uk/?page_id=179

Click here to view the Stourport Trail

'The trail paints a really good picture for visitors'.

Alex Ball (HLF Project Manager)

Planning your interpretation project

This worksheet is to be used with the Interpretive Planning Guide which has guidance on each of the below and can be found here. We recommend that this worksheet is discussed with the key people involved in the project.

How will you do it?

What will you interpret?

Why are you doing this - what are you hoping to achieve?

How will it be managed?

Who is it for?

Monitoring and evaluation.
Think about how you can gather and report visitor responses.
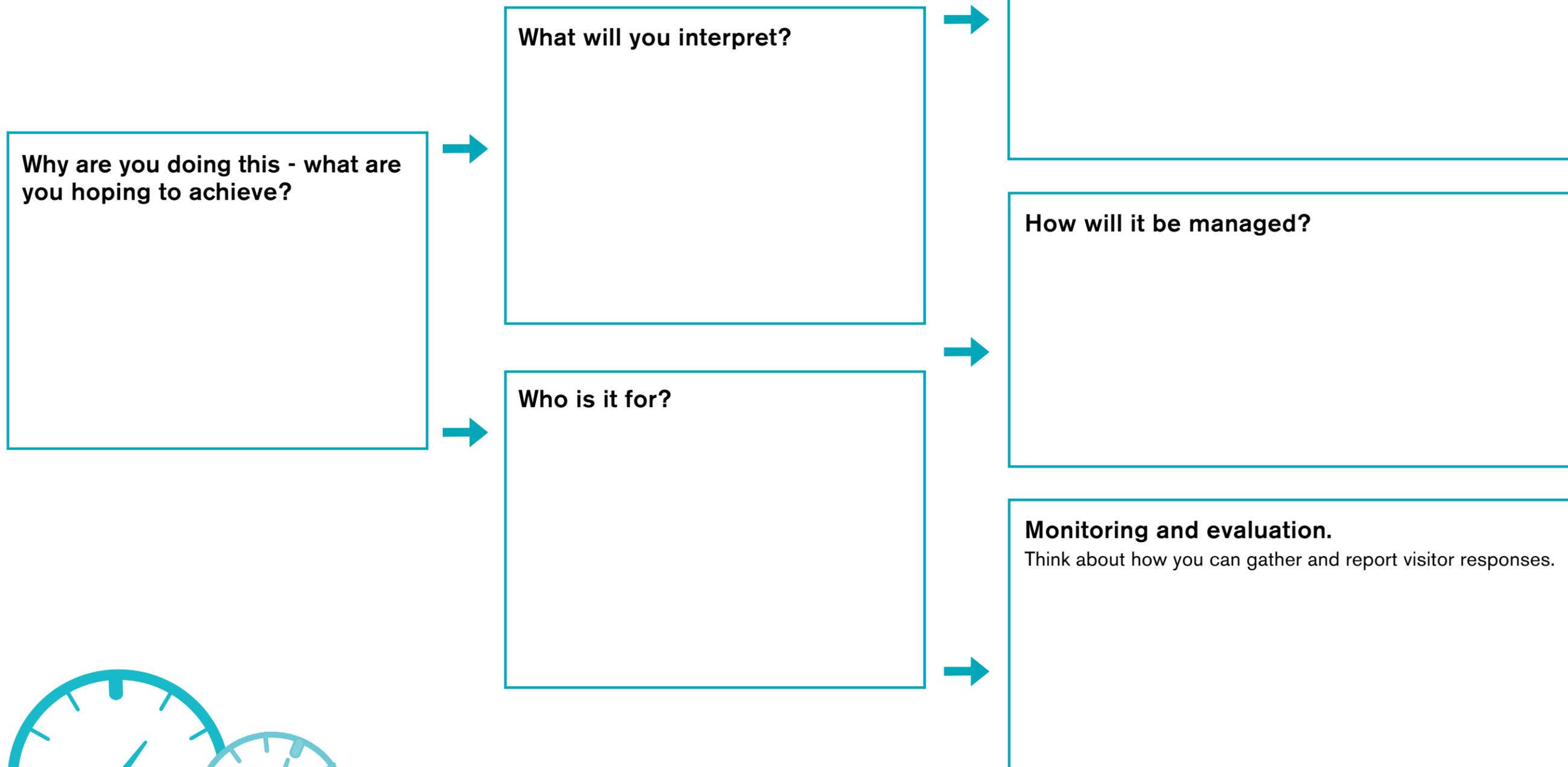
Click here to view the Delivering Waterway Projects.

Audience Section

Please follow the links below for guidance on defining the audience for your waterway:

Worksheet 1: Knowing your visitors

Everyone who spends time on your waterway is a visitor and identifying why they are there can help you to engage with more of your community - which in time means more support for your wider project. We advise that you work through this sheet with your group to focus your mind on who visits your waterway now and who you would like to attract in the future. This sheet will assist you when you are filling in worksheet 2: 'Targeting your audience'.

Who are your visitors now?
Age, gender, where do they come from?

Why do they visit your project and what do visitors do when they are there?
Dog walking/fresh air/exercise?

- You will need to consider that not every place is suitable for everyone.

- Think about what your project has to offer and who might be the most appropriate target for a new audience.

- It can be useful to prioritise a maximum of 3 new audiences.

Who would you like to visit your waterway?
Who would you like to visit your waterway and why?

Worksheet 2: Targeting your audience

Once you have an idea in mind of who you would like to see visiting your waterway you can start to consider how you can best attract them. It is worth thinking about as even with the best interpretation in the world if nobody knows about it nobody will visit. This sheet is best used alongside worksheet 1 'Knowing your visitors'.

How would your target audience hear about you?
Facebook/Word of mouth/posters?

Why would they want to visit?
Dog walking/interest/fresh air?

What would encourage them to visit?

What facilities would they need?
It is a good idea to look at nearby tourist attractions and see what is offered there.

What form of interpretation would best meet their needs?

Click here for more information on learning styles.

Learning Styles – basic principles

When you are deciding on your interpretation project it is worthwhile giving some thought to the following key points:

People learn in different ways and have a preferred style of learning: touch, sight, sound. Can you offer a varied range?

People learn more when they are actively engaged. When they are doing something, such as thinking about a question you have asked or looking for an object.

People learn better when they are at ease.

Read more about learning styles here

Delivering Waterway Intrepretation Projects

To explore the Delivering Waterway Interpretation Projects document which will provide you with detailed information on interpretation media, interpretive planning and evaluation, click on the arrow below:

Commissioning Interpretation

You can plan and produce interpretation on your own; some types of interpretation lend themselves to this more than others, such as guided walks which can be done completely in house. For certain types of interpretation, for instance panels, you will need to work with somebody with professional skills. You might be lucky enough to attract someone to volunteer with you or you may have someone already involved in the project with the necessary skills.

You might want to think about:

- Seeking professional advice on coming up with the concept and planning your interpretation.

- Involving professionals at the later stages of your project, and coming up with the concept and content yourselves.

If you decide to work with professionals (either voluntary or employed) you will need to write a detailed brief considering the following:

- Assessing the different options available and agreeing on the most suitable form of interpretation.

- Defining the project so that you know exactly what you want to achieve.

- Decide on the amount of involvement you want to have with the project.

- Set a timescale for completion of the project and allow yourself plenty of time.

- Identify what you physically want out of the project; for example it could be 200 copies of a trail printed, and a PDF version also provided.
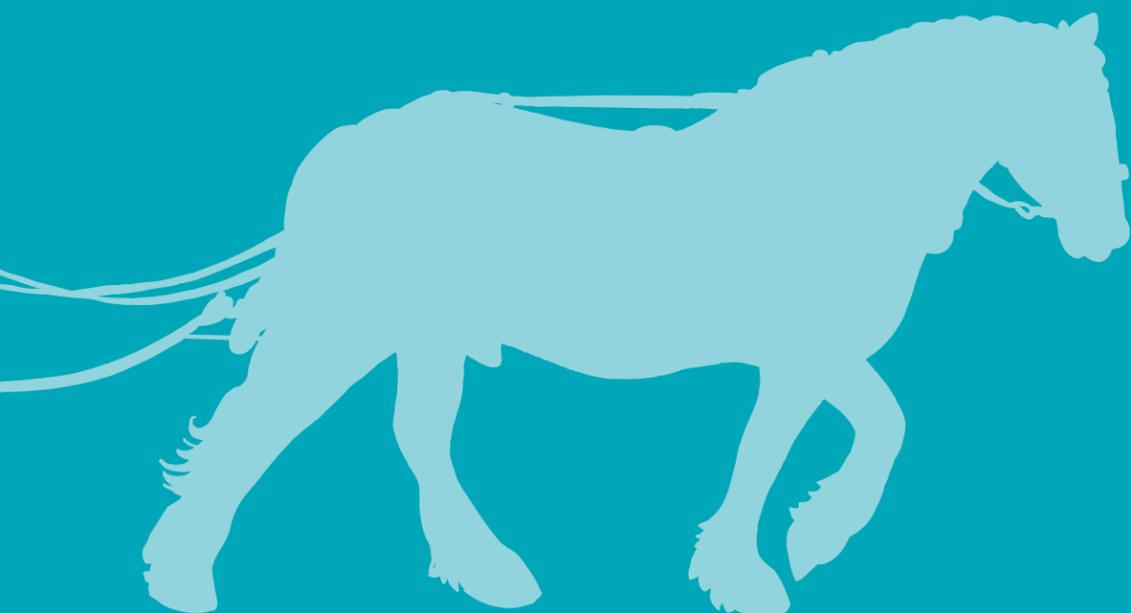
Evaluation

It is important to think about how your will measure the success of you interpretation whilst you are in the planning stages of your project. The earlier you think about evaluation the easier it is to collect baseline data, which is crucial when demonstrating the impact a project has had when applying for funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for example.

Why evaluate?
- You can assess the impact of your interpretation which can help you when planning new schemes. You can establish what works about your interpretation and what you can do to make it better.

- Evidencing this kind of thinking can also be helpful when applying for funding. If you are able to prove that your interpretation has been successful through demonstrating community buy in and the educational/leisure benefits then this can assist in future funding applications.

- It can be rewarding to see the impact your work has had.

Questions to consider when planning your evaluation
- Has the interpretation achieved what you wanted it to - if not, why do you think this is - and what can you do to put this right?

- Did the people involved in creating and running the project learn new skills?

- You will find that people visit you for a range of reasons and they will have expectations. How well did you meet with visitor expectations?

- What impacts have been made through the interpretation project?

How to evaluate
General points to consider

Evaluating through numbers is a valuable evaluation method, however the number of people involved in an activity do not indicate how well people are learning or enjoying the interpretation. Measuring learning requires engaging with your audience to get their feedback. There are lots of different ways to do this and you will need to decide which way is best suited to your interpretation and the resources you have. Some examples are:

- Simply ask people what they think or run surveys on site. This can be a quick way of getting some instant feedback.

- You could hand out questionnaires. It is important that if you give people a short questionnaire they have enough time to answer. An email or online survey can provide an answer to this. Survey Monkey is one site through which you can run surveys.

- If you have school groups visiting the site then the evaluation will serve you better if it is quick and simple - like a hand count - where supervisors can record answers to questions such as: 'who enjoyed today?'.

For information on the different methods of evaluation **Click here.**

Click here to view the HLF guide to evaluation.
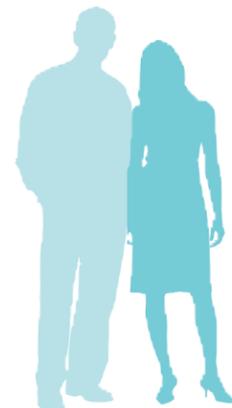
Association for Heritage Interpretation website

The Association for Heritage Interpretation is a website full of useful resources which can inform your project. It is well worth having a look before you embark on your project. You can find the website here: http://www.ahi.org.uk/

Contact Information

IWA and Canal & River Trust would like to thank the following for appearing in our video:

Gillian Bolt from IWA.
Ian Edgar MBE from Bugsworth Basin Heritage Trust.
Michelle Fullard from National Trust including all the volunteers and visitors at the National Trust property Moseley Hall at the time of filming.

IWA and Canal & River Trust would like to thank the following for their contributions to case studies:

Andy Bridge from Lagan Valley Regional Park.
David Penberthy from CADW.
Debra Wilson from Moors for the Future Partnership.
Derek Gittings from Dudley Canal Trust.
Donna Watson from Great Yarmouth Heritage Walks.
Eleanor Roberts from The Jane Austen Centre.
Eliza Botham from Ice House.
Ian Edgar MBE from Bugsworth Basin Heritage Trust.
Michael G Beech from Foxton Inclined Plane Trust.
Sebastian Fattorini from Skipton Castle.
Steve Wood from Caldon & Uttoxeter Canals Trust.

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