


# Sharing our Stories



Using interpretation to improve the visitors' experience at heritage sites



# This Manual focuses on what you can do to make a measurable improvement to how visitors experience your heritage site.

## Acknowledgements

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## SECTION 1

# INTRODUCTION: why visitor experience matters

*This Manual has been written to help heritage site managers understand and improve how visitors experience their heritage sites. It offers a practical and pragmatic approach suitable for busy people with businesses to run. It assumes customer/visitor satisfaction is a core part of business success and recognises that for heritage sites the quality of the visit experience and the insight that visitors gain into the story and significance of the place are key factors in building that satisfaction.*

This Manual shows you how to use interpretation to create better heritage experiences and have more satisfied visitors at your site. It focuses on you, your visitors and your site and what you can do to make a measurable difference.

## Background

Ireland's heritage is a key element of the broader tourism experience. It draws people here and is a significant part of what they enjoy once they are here (see *Section 2*). Two in every three of our visitors will go to a heritage site or visitor attraction during their stay; their experience of it will have an enormous influence on their overall satisfaction with Ireland.

During 2009 Fáilte Ireland ran a series of workshops on using interpretation to improve the visitor experience at heritage sites and piloted a heritage interpretation mentoring programme. This Manual includes material from both these initiatives, and aims to complement the learning that participants took from them. It can be used either with a mentor or independently.

## About the EXERCISES

'Sharing our Stories' is in two parts. This Manual contains information about why interpretation and visitor experience at heritage sites matters, and advice on good practice illustrated by examples from successful attractions both at home and abroad. The Sharing our Stories exercises at the front of this Manual help you apply these to your site and lead you through the interpretation planning process.



**Feed visitors' interest  
with stories that fire  
their imagination.**

## SECTION 2

# The importance of heritage and cultural tourism



Heritage and cultural tourism<sup>1</sup> is a large and fast-growing industry. The World Tourism Organisation has calculated that it represents 35-40% of all tourism worldwide and that it is growing at a rate of 15% per annum (i.e. three times the rate of growth of more general tourism). This is a growth area with tremendous potential for Ireland in the future.

## SOME KEY FACTS

- **Two thirds** of committed cultural tourists work in professional or managerial positions. The average income of cultural tourists is one third higher than the EU average. (Source: *European Travel Commission 2005*)
- Globally, culture and heritage tourists include the **full spectrum of ages**. Two large segments are young people (20-29 years) and those in the 39-59 years age bracket. (Source: *European Travel Commission 2005*)
- The **average cultural tourist** spends €70 per day while on holiday (compared to just over €40 per day for the city-break tourist). (Source: *Mintel Cultural & Heritage Tourism Report*)

## Culture and heritage tourists to Ireland

Culture and heritage tourism is one of Ireland's leading indigenous industries.

## SOME KEY FACTS

- It is estimated that up to €2.3 billion for the **Irish economy** is generated from overseas tourists who engage in Cultural and Heritage pursuits. (Source: *Fáilte Ireland Survey of Travelers 2008*)
- Around two thirds (68%) of overseas visitors to Ireland (3.3 million people) participated in **historic or cultural activities** in 2008. In addition, there were approximately two million domestic visits. (Source: *Fáilte Ireland Cultural Tourism Facts 2008, and Domestic Tourism Facts 2008*)
- 87% of these foreign visitors are in the **higher ABC1** socio-economic category, compared to a rate of 79% ABC1 amongst the general tourist population coming to Ireland. (Source: *Fáilte Ireland Cultural Tourism Strategy 2006*)
- Ireland's **main markets** for culture and heritage tourism are the UK, US, France, Germany, as well as the domestic market.

<sup>1</sup> Culture and heritage tourism encompasses the full range of experiences visitors can enjoy, which make a destination distinctive – the lifestyle, the heritage, the arts, the people. This Manual focuses on heritage, but that, of course, frequently embraces other aspects of culture.

The most important reasons for overseas visitors choosing Ireland as their holiday destination are:

- friendly and hospitable people
- scenery
- unspoilt environment
- safety and security
- the range of natural attractions
- the range of things to do and see

History and culture, the anticipation of discovering a new destination and the prospect of a relaxed pace of life also rate highly. (Source *Fáilte Ireland Visitor Attitudes Survey 2008*.)

### The power of people

The single most important motivating factor that visitors to Ireland mention is the Irish people. The value of interaction with local Irish people in contributing to visitors' experience cannot be over-emphasised. The more that people and their stories are built into the experience at a heritage site, the higher the visitors' satisfaction level. This is very significant for planning interpretation.

A series of consumer focus groups carried out by Fáilte Ireland in 2008 showed that visitors expect and enjoy opportunities to meet and interact with local Irish people. Given recent social and demographic changes in Irish society, visitors find fewer and fewer opportunities to have this interaction. If it can be introduced during their visit to a heritage site, that visit can become one of the most memorable experiences of their holiday.



#### CASE STUDY: COUNTY MUSEUM, DUNDALK

## Enabling visitors to be active participants in heritage

The **County Museum, Dundalk** sets out to give visitors an all-encompassing experience and to ensure that everyone (no matter what his or her interests) feels at home with the subject matter. Two exhibitions that demonstrate this approach are *On the trail of the Arctic Fox* (an exhibition on the Arctic explorer Sir Francis Leopold McClintock) and *ASI: North Louth – Archaeological Scene Investigations in North Louth* (an exhibition featuring finds discovered during the construction of the western Dundalk by-pass).

Developing such exhibitions has helped the Museum expand its own range of skills and competencies. These projects have energised and inspired museum staff and partners. This has allowed the Museum to develop complementary events, including conferences and websites, to accompany the major exhibition. These provide a rich legacy of research resources long after the main event has ended.

Both of these exhibitions identified the schools' market as a potential audience and developed events accordingly. A series of living history presentations with 'McClintock' introduced 7-10 year olds to the principles of Arctic planning and map-reading. Classes on Louth's flora and fauna provided the background to understanding the life of Ireland's first settlers.



## What do our visitors expect?

Our target consumers are looking for active involvement in a heritage experience. They want to engage with a destination's heritage through learning, interacting and doing, rather than simply observing it (*Source: Fáilte Ireland Innovation Research, carried out by Genesis Marketing, 2007*). For them a satisfying experience can include linking heritage sites to contemporary life, participating in festivals or arts performances, visiting atmospheric towns and villages, visiting places associated with famous people or other aspects of contemporary culture (e.g. locations of movies), and eating local food.

Authenticity in heritage is very important to visitors who are looking for a genuine and distinctive experience. They particularly value aspects of a culture and heritage that are supported by the local population. Accessing 'real' experiences, which are enjoyed by the locals and connect to the local area, is important in their overall satisfaction levels with their holiday.

Well-planned interpretation creates the active, engaged and authentic interaction with heritage sites that these consumers want and expect. Our visitors need easy access, both physical and intellectual, to our culture and heritage and they need interpretation to make that visit worthwhile, meaningful and memorable.

## Interpretation and building memorable experiences

Bringing the past to life so that it resonates with visitors, and gets them thinking and talking is the role of interpretation. It is a communication process that links factual information to the immediate, first hand experience of the place and to the contemporary lives of visitors. It sheds light on the present and gives meaning to the past. It links us to the stories of the generations who were here before us. These are the rewards that heritage sites can offer visitors, and interpretation delivers them.

Of course, many factors come together to make a good visitor experience. How easy the site is to find both online and physically, how it is promoted, the welcome, the state of the toilets, the quality of the paths and physical access, places to sit and talk, and the attitude of staff, are all important parts of the experience at any attraction. But for heritage sites there is another element: visitors who are drawn to heritage want to know something about why that place matters, what has happened there and how that relates to them. They visit because second hand accounts, or reading books and websites are not the same as 'being there'.

Well-planned interpretation makes the experience of 'being there' richer and more relevant. It welcomes modern visitors into the rich heritage of your site and helps them appreciate its treasures. It engages visitors in activities and gives information that provokes their emotions, imagination and understanding. It sheds light on Irish culture, past and present, and provokes questions and dialogue.

This need not be complicated. The best interpretation is often a well-informed person who is steeped in understanding of the site and passionate about welcoming visitors into its story. Welcoming, well-informed, well-trained and responsive guides can give visitors that first hand contact with Irish people that so many find attractive. Of course, interpretation can use other media such as print (panels and leaflets in all their forms), audio, multi-media and others. (*Section 8* considers this in more detail and will help you choose what will work best for you at your site.)

Interpreting heritage sites well will enhance visitor satisfaction levels and build memorable experiences of your site that they will want to talk about. Good interpretation translates into positive word of mouth referrals to other potential visitors, an invaluable asset to a tourism business.

Interpretation, particularly if carried out face-to-face, can be 'the voice of the place'. It can incorporate human-interest stories, local folklore, dialect and accent.

We know that heritage visitors want 'authenticity'. Getting as close as possible to 'the real thing' is vital – whether that is seeing local women weave carpets at Killybegs, County Donegal or hearing the documented stories of individual emigrants on the Dunbrody Famine Ship in New Ross County Wexford.





**The single most important motivating factor that visitors to Ireland mention is the Irish people.**

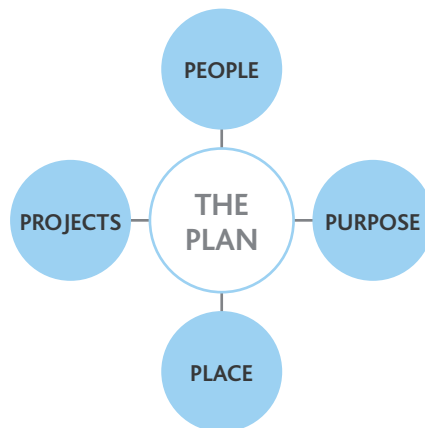
## SECTION 3

# Laying the foundations of great visits

*Good interpretation doesn't happen by accident. It involves careful planning: thinking about your site, your visitors and your organisation and then being creative about how you can communicate.*

*None of these things are in themselves difficult but considering them all at the same time can be tricky. Following a clear planning structure is very helpful.*

## Four Ps in planning interpretation



Thinking carefully about these four issues will help you produce effective interpretation.

**People** – you need to know who your visitors are, and what they want from you. *Section 4* considers this in more detail.

**Purpose** – you need to know what your business or organisation wants to achieve from this communication. This includes knowing what message you want to get across, your key selling point, and the main story you have to tell. *Sections 5 and 6* cover this in more detail.

**Place** – your site, staff and collections are vital resources that you need to make the best of. *Section 7* looks at this.

**Projects** – When you have gathered information about all of the above, you can think about how to create enjoyable and appropriate interpretation for your site. *Section 8* looks at the tools and media you can use.

This process, together with a system for measuring the impact of your projects, makes up your **Plan**. *The Exercises* will help you look at these four Ps and work on developing your own Interpretation Plan for your site.

## Communicating with visitors – the big picture

Interpretation is vital to help people understand and engage with a heritage site and make their visit something special. But of course it is not the only thing that happens during a visit.

How well your interpretation works will depend on how the visitor is feeling. People who feel welcome, relaxed and comfortable with the visit are much more likely to pay attention to interpretation. Your visitors' state of mind will be influenced by your promotion, the approach to your site, the welcome, the attitude of staff, customer care in all its aspects, the structure and accessibility of the site and many other things. Getting these aspects of the visit right will help people get the most from your interpretation.

So, looking at the whole visitor experience is important for planning your interpretation. The visitor needs different information at different parts of their visit.

## A mechanism for communicating with visitors – the visit cycle



## A. PRE VISIT – Promotion

This is probably the first communication from you that your visitors see. They read it before they set off on their visit, probably even before they have decided to embark on the visit. It needs to tell them that your place exists and persuade them that they would enjoy visiting.

Promotion should answer questions like:

- Is this 'our sort of place'?
- What will we do there?
- How long should we plan to stay?
- Will we be able to cope with it – physically and/or intellectually?
- Where is it?
- What will we do if it rains?
- Can we get food there?

**The promotion raises people's expectation of a good visit.**

## B. ON ARRIVAL – Welcome and orientation

As soon as they arrive at the site people need:

- reassurance that they made a good decision in coming here and that the expectations raised by the promotion will be fulfilled.
- to be able to find what they are looking for and plan their day.

The welcome is the single most important piece of communication – and is best achieved by a warm and genuine smile. If and when that is not possible, you have to use other media. The welcoming person may also give orientation, i.e. information that helps people work out where they are going to go. This will need to be reinforced by signage and/or maps because people will forget the verbal instruction. They will also, incidentally, forget the map of the site on the orientation panel in the car park.

Visits to heritage sites are full of distractions and potential irritations. The welcome and attention to making the customer comfortable should continue throughout the visit. This is reflected in how staff treat visitors, and in the structure of the site, including seating, shelter etc.

Orientation should help visitors relax by answering questions like:

- How far is it to what we want to see/do?
- What is this place about?
- Are there any special events at particular times?
- How long will it take to walk round?
- Where can we eat lunch?
- Where are the toilets?
- Where can children let off steam?
- Where can we sit down and rest?
- Who can help us if we need help or want to know more?

**The welcome and orientation help people feel comfortable and relaxed, ready to explore the site.**

## C. DURING THE VISIT – Interpretation

This is the communication at the core of the visit. It should use experiences and information to provoke the visitors' curiosity, engage their interest and help them discover the story of the site. It will influence what they say about the place as they leave and whether they come back. It is vital to any successful heritage attraction.

Interpretation can answer questions like:

- Why does this place matter?
- Why is it like it is?
- What do I feel about this place and/or the people who lived here?
- What was it like in the past?
- What is happening here now?
- What will it be in the future?

**Interpretation helps people relate to and understand what is special about the site. It informs and enlivens their visit and makes the place into somewhere meaningful and memorable.**

## D. END OF VISIT – Follow-up reading, appeals, events programme

At the end of a successful visit, visitors will want to find out more, to remember what they have seen, done and heard. They will be interested in future events and will be more willing to support your work through memberships and donations. They probably want something they can take away with them. This is a good opportunity to:

- Sell experience-related merchandise/souvenirs
- Promote visits to related sites
- Encourage return visits
- Attract support for your work
- Recruit members

**The end of the visit should reinforce visitors' connection with the site/your organisation and pave the way for the next visit.**

Once you have established this basic structure of information, you can focus on enhancing the visitor experience by adding extra elements – imagination, interaction, humour, drama, inspiration and personal touches – to the interpretation.

**EXERCISE 1 will help you look imaginatively at the whole visit for your site.**

## SECTION 4

# PEOPLE: developing a visitor-friendly approach to interpretation

*All successful businesses set great store on knowing their customers and what they want. This is particularly true for heritage sites whose product is an experience.*

## Why do people make leisure visits?

Heritage sites are in competition with a range of other activities for a highly prized commodity – people's leisure time. People want rewards from their leisure time and choose how they spend it carefully. Some of the main things that people are looking for from their leisure are listed below. Whilst an individual heritage attraction should not expect to tick all these boxes, you should think about how many of these desires your site can meet.

VISITORS WANT ...	THIS MEANS THAT ...
Group bonding, i.e. to feel good about the family or social group they are spending time with, time to chat and be together. <i>N.B: This is probably the single most important reward for most visitors.</i>	Interpretation should encourage people to talk. Guides should initiate conversations and ask as well as answer questions. Trails should provoke discussion. The site should encourage shared activities (these could range from playing games to having a cup of tea).
Something for everyone in the group	Sites should provide a diverse and varied experience with good opportunities for active and less mobile, solitary and social, young and old, local and foreign visitors.
Social experience, being part of a wider group. (This is about meeting new people/ being part of a community of shared interest – the experience offered by sports events or pop concerts, for example.)	Sites should seek opportunities for enabling people to be part of a bigger group – events, festivals and other celebrations can do this.
Relaxation – time out, things made easy	Customer care is an important aspect of people's enjoyment and should create a hassle-free visit.
New experiences – a bit of novelty, a break in routine	Demonstrations and participatory activities and the chance to try out new skills can add considerably to the visit experience.
Challenge	This is an extension of the above. Generally heritage sites are not well positioned to provide adrenalin rushes but smaller levels of challenge may be achievable.
Learning. (This is a motivator for leisure visits for only about 10% of the population, including most visitors to heritage sites.)	Heritage sites are often very good at providing learning experiences. However, this attracts only a small proportion of the population. Sites that wish to widen their audiences, need to provide some of the other features on this list in addition to learning.

EXERCISE 2 focuses on which of these rewards your site offers your visitors.

## Who are your visitors?

Like any business you need to know your audience. You probably already do – hopefully you or someone else talks to them every day. Make sure this customer care translates into good feedback about their experience that you can use to review and develop the interpretation.

You should start by making sure that your existing visitors are happy and that they leave thinking and saying good things about their experience. If they do, there is a good chance they will repeat those things to someone else and we all know that word of mouth is powerful advertising. Find out what they like – and keep, or even enhance, those aspects. Pay equal attention to what they don't like and try to change those things.

But don't stop there. Ask yourself if there is anyone else who could be visiting but who doesn't reach your door. If so, what can you do to convert them into visitors?

If you have a business plan you will have already identified your target markets and their characteristics; make sure your interpretation is aimed at the same people as your business plan.

### Help with business planning

The Fáilte Ireland website, [www.businesstools.failteireland.ie](http://www.businesstools.failteireland.ie) offers a series of free online business tools, including How to prepare a Business & Marketing Plan. The site is easy to use and includes a selection of downloadable Word and Excel templates.

Fáilte Ireland also offers a specialised mentoring programme to support tourism businesses, including heritage sites, develop a business plan. Further information on this service can be found at: [www.bizcheck.ie](http://www.bizcheck.ie)

## Audiences for Irish heritage tourism and interpretation

Fáilte Ireland's Cultural Strategy identifies three broad categories of visitors to heritage sites, based on their levels of knowledge and motivation.

### Motivated visitors

These people have probably sought out your site as part of a holiday largely planned around culture and heritage. They are often well traveled and have experience of culture and heritage internationally. They have good background knowledge: they usually know what they are looking for, will know it when they see it and will understand its significance. Their expectations may be high in terms of how the story of the site is presented. Accuracy will be important to them. They may like to discuss their interest and/or have quite specialised questions. They are likely to ignore entry-level interpretation.

### Inspired visitors

These people have made their holiday choice inspired by the range and breadth of cultural opportunities associated with a destination. Although they have a broad interest in culture and sightseeing their historical knowledge can be quite superficial. They are looking for an overview and to develop a sense of the place they are visiting. They therefore need a good introduction that establishes the site within the framework of their previous knowledge (through reference to nearby sites, a wider historical context, international links). Authenticity is particularly important to this group. This is almost always the largest visitor segment for a heritage site and is the main target for most interpretation.

### Incidental visitors

These are people with low levels of interest in culture and heritage who visit your site for non-heritage related reasons (perhaps because someone else in their group is interested, or they are on a walk that goes through your site, or it is raining or a host of other reasons). These people did not choose their holiday for heritage and cultural reasons and are likely to assume they are not interested in your subject. They can often be engaged by an alternative approach; establishing relevant contemporary links to the heritage story can be important. Skilled site staff are often the best method of assessing and responding to the interests of these visitors.

**EXERCISE 3** helps you consider the relevance of these three audiences to your site.

### Other visitors with specific needs

Some of your visitors need interpretation to be presented in a particular way. As well as considering their knowledge and motivation (*see above*) you need to think about the structural and organisational aspects of the visit. The following groups need different approaches; all could contain Motivated, Inspired and Incidental Visitors.

### Families

Families are likely to be especially important for the domestic market. Interpretation for families should involve the whole family in active exploration and discussion. Both adults and children can have a range of motivations and background knowledge but many families are likely to fall into the Inspired category and so will need support in understanding what your site is about. A relatively high proportion of children may be Incidental visitors (they are the

ones who feel they have been 'dragged along' by parents or grandparents!) and special initiatives may be required to capture their interest. Interpretation for families may also appeal to adult Inspired or Incidental Visitors.

### Visitors with disabilities

This group includes a wide range of people including those with reduced mobility, sensory impairment and learning difficulties. The equality legislation places duties on providers of goods, services and facilities not to discriminate against people with disabilities.

Like everyone else, tourism providers must take reasonable steps to ensure that their practices, policies and procedures make their facilities and services accessible to people with disabilities. You must consider the needs of visitors with a disability and provide an accessible environment, accessible information and accessible communications. For more guidance on welcoming visitors with disabilities refer to the *Resources pages*.

Accessible sites and interpretation also work better and feel easier for many visitors, including families, who do not regard themselves as having a disability.

### Coach parties

Organised coach tours are very important for many heritage businesses. They have the advantage of being predictable (i.e. they book in advance), often provide repeat business (if you satisfy their needs they will return) and are usually clear about their expectations.

They often have very specific requirements, most of which arise from having a tight timetable and a large group of people. Thirty or more people arriving at the same time, all wanting to see the same thing and needing to leave on schedule can be challenging for small heritage sites. You will need to develop a strategy for dealing with this so that everyone has a good experience. This may well mean you have to divide the party and adjust the route of your tours so that you can run multiple tours at the same time and/or offer parallel activities.

Good communication with the tour operators about what you can offer is important. The quality and capacity of your catering and toilets can be significant factors for them. Providing the coach driver with a relaxing environment separate from his party is very valuable in keeping the coach tours coming.

### Schools and formal education groups

Schools share some of the characteristics of coach parties in that they are pre-booked and have a predetermined timetable for the visit. They usually have rather different and well-defined needs in terms of required outcomes of the visit, the curriculum and their activity. They fall into a different category from the leisure visitor and should be planned for separately, ideally by working with teachers. It is worth bearing in mind, however, that some materials and activities designed for school groups can be adapted to work well with leisure visitors.

### Interpretation for different audiences in practice

You need to know which of the above audiences are most important to you and whose needs you can meet. In practical terms, it is best to plan for no more than three target audiences. This helps you to stay focused and, so long as your audiences are different enough, will result in a good range of interpretive provision.

For instance, many sites will identify that their targets are Inspired tourists, Family groups and Motivated tourists. This helps you to identify some things your interpretation must do.

**Inspired tourists** – your interpretation needs to be aimed at non-specialists with an emphasis on authentic experience, making links to local culture and people.





## CASE STUDIES

### Interpretation and authenticity

An authentic experience of history is not easy to define or deliver. The past is gone and can be hard to understand. We find it easiest to understand if we can hear from someone who was there, but that is not always possible.

**Decades ago...** The **Big Pit in South Wales** is an example of how working with ex-miners from the local community ensures authenticity. This Museum commemorates and celebrates life in the Welsh coalfields before the decline of the mining industry in the 1980s. Visitors not only go down the pit to experience something of life underground, which is memorable in itself, but also hear about working life in the mines from someone who experienced it. The miners speak with knowledge and authority based on first hand experience. The museum now faces the challenge of how they will maintain this experience when this generation of guides retires.

**Centuries ago...** No living person remembers sailing on Brunel's great iron ship **SS Great Britain, now in Bristol**, so the interpretation cannot be first hand. The authenticity here derives from careful research into the documentary archive, including diary accounts of individuals who travelled from Bristol to Australia.

The interpretive audio tours draw on the letters and journals of these individuals to create a vivid picture of life on board for steerage and first class passengers. All the reconstructed scenes (e.g. passengers having a fight, or a woman giving birth) that visitors encounter on board are based on diary evidence. This provides authenticity and ensures that intellectual rigour underlies the interpretation.

**Millennia ago...** The distant past, before written records, is shrouded in mystery. The main evidence we have of the people who built **Maes Howe, Heart of Neolithic Orkney World Heritage Site** are the standing stones, buildings and artefacts they left behind. A skilled guide uses these to show how archaeologists have constructed ideas of their makers, and allows time for visitors to ponder on our connections with these ancient ancestors and their monuments.

**Families** – your interpretation must be interactive and social. (This may mean adding tactile, practical discussion and/or role-playing elements to a guided tour to make it a 'family tour' or creating simple family self-guided trails around the site.)

**Motivated tourists** – your interpretation needs to provide detailed information (but keep this separate from the information designed for your other visitors – for example, in more detailed leaflets, options on an audio tour, pdf downloads etc.).

Every site has a range of visitors; the trick is to provide what each one needs, without compromising what is provided for others. People who want to pick up the headline points from your site on a quick visit should be able to do that. Those who wish to delve into the detail of the site's history should be able to do that too. Providing appropriate opportunities for people with different levels of interest is called layering and is an important part of good interpretation.

Meeting the needs of more specialised visitors can cause considerable concern for site staff and managers who fear the accusation of 'dumbing down'. Knowledgeable visitors will probably want detailed information that is not appropriate in the general interpretation and may ask difficult questions. You need to be able to point them to the information they want. However, it is important to remember experts are a small proportion of your visitors and that too much detail will deter the majority who need a more entry-level introduction to your site and subject. Most knowledgeable visitors understand this and, *so long as their own needs are met*, are comfortable with it.

**Identifying your target audiences for interpretation is a vital part of the planning process. EXERCISE 4 helps you do this.**



### Getting to know your visitors

Whoever your target audience is, you need to find out what they want as the first step of providing appropriate interpretation. This applies to people who are already visiting, people who you would like to visit, experts, families – and any other audience you can dream up for your site.

You can talk to visitors in a number of ways. Organised groups for example, are relatively easy to contact. If coach parties are part of your audience, the tour operators will be able to give you precise feedback about how well your site meets their needs and how that could be improved. The same applies to schools where local teachers will be able to give you similar advice.

The general leisure visitors are more diverse. To find out how they are responding you need to speak to them on site. You could use your volunteer and face-to-face staff to do this. Think about what information you need and plan your questions carefully.

GOOD THINGS TO ASK YOUR VISITORS ...	... AND HOW TO USE THEIR ANSWERS
Where have you come from today? Where do you live?	This mainly helps with targeting your promotion. You may also want to know how they found out about your site. If a large proportion of your visitors are relatively local that suggests that events might appeal to them.
Who are you visiting with today?	This tells you about the size of the group and so the extent to which this is a social visit (will benefit from interpretation that people can do together) and what proportion of your visiting groups include children (and therefore probably looking for more active involvement)
How often do you come here?	This tells you how frequently your interpretation needs to change.
What do you plan to do here today? (asked at start of visit)	Listen carefully. This tells you about how people perceive your site and why they really come.
What have you done here today?	People will not tell you everything they've done: this answer will tell you about the highlights that they remember.
How long do you plan to spend here today? (before visit)/have you spent here today? (after visit)	This tells you whether people are finding enough to do on your site – or whether it is exceeding their expectations.
Do you think this visit was good value (for charging site)/worthwhile?	Probably the most crucial information of all and the thing people are most likely to talk about afterwards. A negative response here means you have to change something.
What do you especially like about this site?	Another one to pay close attention to because the answers may surprise you. Build on the strengths that visitors identify. If they do not mention things that you consider important, think about how you can make them more attractive.
Have you looked at any information (e.g. leaflets, panels etc.) – if so which?	An important reality check on whether the interpretation and other information you have out there is doing its job. If visitors are missing things, follow this up by some observational work (see <i>Section 9</i> ) and/or look at the location to see if that's why visitors ignore it. Also consider if the design is sufficiently attractive and eye-catching for that location/stage of the visit.
Do you know ... ?	Add a few questions to test what visitors have understood of your key message (see <i>Section 6</i> ). This might include ... who owns this site? ... the name of a famous person who lived here? ... anything that happened here?
How interested would you say you are in history and archaeology?	This helps you to know where to pitch your information – note this question is about interest rather than knowledge.



GOOD THINGS TO ASK YOUR VISITORS ...	... AND HOW TO USE THEIR ANSWERS
Would you be interested in learning more about ...	This question allows you to test ideas and possibilities for future developments to see what is likely to appeal.
Would you be interested in activities/projects related to local history and archaeology, e.g.: ...	This question should include a range of media to see what your audience warms to.
Any suggestions for what we could do to improve your visit?	Another really important question. People often reply thoughtfully with understanding of the difficulties. Of course this is where problems will be raised – so expect to hear about the toilets etc. here.

Collecting this data before you install new interpretation gives you a baseline which helps you measure the impact of what you've done (see *Section 9*).

### Some things to remember about producing visitor-friendly interpretation

Good interpretation is planned around the visitors and responds to them. Whatever medium you use, the following guidelines will help make the interpretation easier and more enjoyable for your visitor.

1. Remember that the success of interpretation depends on the <b>complete visitor experience</b> . Visitors are not going to learn unless they feel welcome, relaxed and comfortable at your site.	6. Make your <b>content relevant and accessible</b> . Be personal – use characters and people in your interpretation. Engage your visitors by drawing them into conversations and encouraging them to use their senses and imagination to explore the site.
2. Use a range of <b>communication methods</b> – this will keep all your visitors interested for longer.	7. <b>Be brief</b> . Much interpretation (including leaflets, panels, audio tours, guided walks and audio-visual presentations) is too long. Give people a clear introduction and summary and options for finding out more.
3. <b>Be interested in your visitors</b> – watch them, talk to them, listen to them. Most important of all, respond to what they tell you.	8. Involve people and <b>encourage group interaction</b> . Ask your visitors questions, use their experiences and encourage them to think for themselves. Don't just give answers.
4. Have a <b>simple and interesting main message</b> (see <i>Section 6</i> ). Reinforce it wherever possible.	9. <b>Use real things</b> , and specific examples – not abstract explanations.
5. <b>Give people something to do</b> , not just something to read. Linking the message to the experience increases learning.	10. <b>Don't be too solemn or serious</b> .

EXERCISE 5 is about applying these guidelines to your own site.

EXERCISE 6 gets to grips with the experience your site offers. It is probably the single most important thing in this Manual. If you don't do any of the other exercises, make sure you do this one. And do it well!

## SECTION 5

# PURPOSE: why are you doing this?

*Before you embark on any new interpretation project you need to know why you are doing it. Interpretation can benefit your business in two ways: by helping you achieve your objectives and increasing customer satisfaction.*

*It is almost inevitable that you will have to argue for resources internally and externally, so it is well worth your spending a bit of time identifying the benefits your project will bring to both your organisation and your visitors.*

## What your interpretation will do for you

Interpretation can contribute to your business in various ways. The most common include:

- Increasing the amount of time people spend on site
- Influencing the movement of visitors around the site
- Altering the types of visitors
- Increasing the number of visitors in the low or shoulder seasons
- Helping achieve high professional standards and/or recognition, e.g. through museum accreditation
- Highlighting the work of your organisation and gaining support for it
- Increasing the number of repeat visits

Your interpretation projects should be planned to fit with your wider strategic, management and business goals. It can play an important part in helping you achieve objectives relating to, for instance, winning public support, sharing heritage with people, supporting the local economy through attracting tourists, encouraging learning, increasing access and understanding, and/or building community.

Working from the basis of your strategic goals helps you focus on what your interpretation needs to achieve and how you will measure its success.

The Work Example of Carlow Trails of the Saints on page 17 illustrates this.

EXERCISE 7 helps you to work out what interpretation could do for your business.

## What your interpretation will do for your visitors

Most of your business objectives for interpretation will depend on influencing visitors' behaviour, attitudes, feelings or knowledge.

Your new interpretation will, therefore, almost always aim to improve your visitors' experience of the site. It can do this in a range of ways, including:

- Providing accessible contact with heritage for new audiences
- Encouraging visitors to go to different parts of the site
- Increasing understanding of specific aspects of the past and/or present
- Offering social and interactive experiences
- Delivering your messages about your site and your organisation
- Allowing visitors to share their responses to the site and engaging in dialogue with them

When working out your objectives for new interpretation, think about how you will measure the impact it has. Build monitoring and evaluation into your project plan (see Section 9).

The Case Study of The Cliffs of Moher on page 17 illustrates how interpretation can change your visitors' behaviour.



## WORK EXAMPLE: CARLOW TRAILS OF THE SAINTS

### 1. Strategic directions/business objectives

To create a recognisable tourism product that encourages more visitors, particularly more staying visitors, to County Carlow.

To add to and diversify the opportunities presented by the successful "Carlow Golf Trail" and "Carlow Gardens Trail".

To capitalise on Carlow's rich, yet to date underdeveloped, ecclesiastical product for tourism purposes.

### 2. What does the interpretation need to do to help you achieve this?

- Encourage extended visits, not simply quick visits as people pass through.
- Spread people through the area, i.e. not focus solely on Carlow town.
- Be in the same print family as the other two trails.
- Have a different focus to appeal to a different audience – in this case looking at religious and ecclesiastical heritage.
- Have broad appeal, i.e. the ecclesiastical heritage must be presented in a way that will appeal to people interested in social history, art and architecture as well as spiritual pilgrims.

### 3. How will you recognise success?

- Number of trails distributed
- Number of people using trails
- Increase in visitor numbers especially to outlying villages
- Increase in spend in local accommodation, eating establishments and shop



## CASE STUDY: THE CLIFFS OF MOHER

### Using interpretation and infrastructure to change visitor behaviour

The **Cliffs of Moher** are some of the most spectacular sea cliffs in Ireland and one of the country's most important sites for breeding sea birds. They have been a very popular visitor destination since the 18th century. Visitor numbers increased hugely from 250,000 people per year in the mid 1980s to almost 1 million per year by 2007. This surge in popularity led to major problems both for conservation (serious erosion of the top of the cliffs and reduction in numbers of breeding birds) and visitors' health and safety (there were several accidental fatalities).

Clare County Council decided on three measures to address these problems: controlling where visitors walk by creating a new footpath infrastructure, providing a ranger service, and the development of a major new visitor centre.

A basic ranger service (carrying out safety patrols and reactive guiding) was introduced in 2006. The visitor centre, with its major multi-media Atlantic Edge exhibition, opened in February 2007, with an expansion of the ranger service into visitor education.

These initiatives have been very successful. The vast majority of visitors follow the network of surfaced paths to walk to the cliff edge. Erosion has decreased, vegetation has returned, hares are breeding on the cliff tops and more seabirds are now breeding. This change in visitor behaviour appears to be maintained even when the rangers are not on patrol for short period.

## SECTION 6

# PURPOSE: stories and messages

*You almost certainly know your site and its history, its strengths and weaknesses, its people and what they did, very well. The chances are you could talk about it, with passion, knowledge and fascination, for hours. That is fantastic, but it is not what visitors want, or certainly not at the outset.*

*What they need is a good clear, enticing introduction to this place and its world. So you have to do some sharp thinking about what really matters.*

## Sharing our Stories

You need to think about how you are going to introduce your site, its character, its intricacies and complexities, to a visitor encountering it for the first time. Why should they bother spending time getting to know it and its stories? What do they need to understand to make sense of it? What has it to say to them? And most importantly, how can you tell them in ways that will make sense – especially to visitors who may come from the other side of the world, have limited time and passing interest. What do you want them to leave thinking and talking about? What do you want them to tell their friends when they get home?

All over the world, people like stories and our history is like a big bag of stories (sometimes a bit mixed-up and muddled). Interpretation is rather like storytelling; it pulls the right story out of the bag, dusts it down and presents it to people in a coherent way. Stories often contain facts and truth but they draw on emotions, create atmosphere, encourage imagination and can provoke questions and debate. Good interpretation does all these too.

Any good storyteller knows that you have to know the point of the story before you can tell it well. Knowing why you are telling the story is the key to organising the narrative. Likewise, in interpretation you must know what you want to communicate before you can turn it into a visit experience. So before you begin thinking about all the exciting media you can use to tell your story, take some time to reflect on what you really want people to take away from the experience. Identify the core of your story, i.e. your message. Then plan your interpretation to tell that story in the best way you can.

## Some things to remember about messages

Thinking of your message is not difficult, but there are a few important things to think about.

- **Your visitors have limited time and interest so think about what you would tell them in ten seconds. Keep it simple – their attention is likely to wander.**
- **Your message should answer the 'so what?' question – as in "so what? Why should I be interested?".**
- **Visitors will remember what they think about and talk about. The things that will get them talking are the same things that make a good story. Look out particularly for:**
  - personal stories with interesting characters
  - dramatic events – battles, escapes and adventures
  - situations that relate to their own lives
- **Your message should be as specific as possible. It should be clearly and distinctly about your site.**
- **Skip the detail. Visitors remember messages more than factual information. They are much more likely to remember that this is the window from which the imprisoned princess looked for her prince than they are to remember the name of that prince, princess or (especially) the dates.**

EXERCISE 8 helps you create good messages for your site.



### DEVELOPING A MESSAGE: ROS TAPESTRY, NEW ROSS

## Using your message in your interpretation

Your message is an important tool in improving your interpretation. You will use it, in various ways, throughout the development of new interpretation.

In the example on this page, for instance, the message highlights that there are two important sub-messages involved in the Ros Tapestry; one about needlecraft and community involvement, the other about Norman history. Both aspects need to appear in promotional and introductory material and be developed during the visit.

Your message should also guide decisions on what are the key points for a guided tour, or what objects should be included in displays, or what information will be included in an audio tour. It will form the backbone of your communication to visitors and so must be part of your brief to your own staff and to contractors. The delivery of your message will be one of the factors you evaluate. (Section 9).

### Messages and structure of the visitors' experience

Good visits, like good stories, have a structure and your message is an important tool in building that.

You need a great introduction that captures people's interest and tells them why the history of your site is worth spending time on. Then you feed your visitors' interest with further information and stories that fire their imagination, draw upon the physical resources of your site and engage them in interesting and relevant activities. Finally, you want to send them away with something to think and talk about.

The **Ros Tapestry in New Ross, Co. Wexford** is a series of fifteen tapestry panels, each of which has been designed and embroidered by local people. Together they tell the story of the arrival of the Normans in Ireland in the 12th century and their integration into and influence on Irish society. The tapestry panels are displayed in a visitor centre where visitors can also see people embroidering new tapestry panels. Guides lead visitors around the exhibition, telling the story of the Normans as well as talking about how the tapestries were created.

The tapestries illustrate a wide range of stories; some factual, others legendary, covering several centuries. We might start by saying this is about:

*The Normans in Ireland.*

But that's not a good message. It is too broad to give a focus to the interpretation, and too dry to excite either the interpreter or the listener. That basic subject needs, at the very least, to be converted to a site-specific message:

*New Ross was one of the first Norman towns in Ireland.*

This explains why we are talking about the Normans here. The message will be stronger if it relates to what people will see and experience. At its simplest:

*This tapestry tells the story of the Normans in New Ross.*

A good message should also draw on human interest stories such as, in this case:

*Over 100 local people embroidered it.*

A better message highlights the bigger picture, the wider connections of the place that might be relevant to visitors:

*It weaves together a rich mix of history and legend about the Norman and Irish people and their place in 12th century Europe.*

Putting those elements together for the Ros Tapestry:

*This tapestry tells the story of the Normans in New Ross, one of the first Norman towns in Ireland. It was embroidered by over 100 local people and weaves together a rich mix of history and legend about the Normans and the Irish people and their place in 12th century Europe.*

This message is strong enough to give visitors a clear, concise understanding of the tapestry and its interest and tells them what to expect as they go round the visitor centre. It would provide a good introduction to the visit, giving a basic framework for new information about both the Normans and the creation of the tapestry.



## CASE STUDY: MARIAN SHRINE AT KNOCK

### The importance of being there

Pilgrims visiting the **Marian Shrine at Knock**, Co. Mayo are powerfully motivated to visit the actual site of the apparitions at the south gable of Knock Parish Church. They not only want to hear the story of what happened on that spot on 21st August 1879, they also want to experience the place for themselves. They will often have travelled long distances and are prepared to wait for this authentic experience.

This means that you present your message in its simplest and most provocative way at the beginning. Then you can draw the visitors into more detail. Identify how each part of your site can add something relevant to your main message. Each of these sub-messages should be related to something that people can see, do, hear or touch on your site. Linking information to your story and to the site experience makes it all more memorable.

You want **everyone** who visits your site to engage with your main message. But we know that many visitors will not be in a studious frame of mind and are likely to be distracted by a range of other things. Therefore you need to do everything possible to make this basic message easy to understand. It should be:

- **clearly presented** at the start of the visit in a way that raises anticipation and curiosity. Giving visitors a clear introductory message helps them organise new information as it is presented during the visit.
- **delivered in a range of media** across the site. Not everyone will notice your message if you just write it down, so think about how you can get the idea across in pictures, in activities, in guided tours and in other ways too.
- **referred to during and at the end of the visit** – to make sure no one forgets it (but, of course, be careful not to overdo it).
- **fully understood by all face-to-face staff.**
- **featured in your promotion** so that people know what to expect of the interpreted experience on site.
- **added to and developed** in a logical way during the visit. This is where layering (see *Different Audiences in Practice* on page 12) can be important.





#### CASE STUDY: DUNBRODY FAMINE SHIP, NEW ROSS

## Strong messages help make a rich and evocative visitor experience

### Messages and managing new interpretation projects

In project management terms, the message is a crucial part of the brief. It is easy for the message to get lost in all the excitement of introducing new media, activities and people to a site. A well thought out message gives you criteria for assessing the work of your staff, designers and other contractors.

A good message identifies the content and something of the tone of the interpretation. The above message for the Ros Tapestry (*This tapestry tells the story of the Normans at New Ross, one of the first Norman towns in Ireland. It was embroidered by over 100 local people and weaves together a rich mix of history and legend about the Normans and the Irish people and their place in 12th century Europe.*) for example clarifies that:

- This is about storytelling (the interpretation should therefore include why local people choose to tell this story).
- This is specifically about New Ross (this points to including why New Ross was built here, and identifying surviving evidence of Norman activity in the area).
- This is about local people (including who got involved and the history of the project).
- This will include history, legend and hearsay (with clear distinctions between them).
- This will include links to other places in Europe.

These message-based criteria should be part of a brief for any new work. Writing them into the brief helps any contractor understand what is expected of them and gives you clear requirements against which new interpretation proposals can be tested.

**EXERCISE 9** helps you identify how your message will work for you and what it tells you about what the interpretation must do.

Like the Ros Tapestry, the **Dunbrody Famine Ship** has two core messages: that thousands of Irish people, many of them impoverished by the Potato Famine, emigrated, particularly to the United States, during the 19th century and that this boat is a replica of the original Dunbrody built by the local community to commemorate the people who emigrated.

The interpretation uses these contrasting stories in a carefully-planned way to create a rich and varied experience. The introductory audio-visual introduces both main messages. The footage about the reconstruction of the boat is detailed and moving and establishes, at the start of the visitor journey, that what people will see is a reconstruction. This means the rest of the tour can concentrate on interpreting the experiences of the emigrants as they sailed to the New World.

En route to the ship, the tour guide stops the visitors at the "Roll of Honour" panel. This reinforces the sub-message, introduced in the video, that many Irish immigrants, and their descendants, played an important part in the development of America. Including this sub-message here reminds visitors that the emigration was a beginning as well as an end. This changes the emotional tone of the visit.

The story of the emigrants is a human and evocative one and the interpretation makes the most of this. Each visitor has an individual ticket and is invited to find their bunk. The costumed first-person interpreters deliver good, convincing, and sometimes harrowing, accounts of why they are emigrating and what they have experienced. Most importantly, they engage visitors in dialogue, which draws them further into the 19th century world. All these devices build empathy with the original emigrants.

The costumed interpreters are in role and are, therefore, fixed in the 19th century. They talk freely with visitors but only deliver information that relates to the emigrations. The tour guide is not in role so can discuss both the reconstruction and the emigration as well as Health and Safety and other essential organisational issues.

## SECTION 7

# PLACE: making the most of what you've got

*Before you launch into planning exactly how you will develop new interpretation you need to consider your resources. This will help you decide which media will work best for you.*

*This is not simply about what you can afford – although obviously that is a very important consideration. It is also about making the best of what you already have.*

Visitors don't come to your site just to listen or read. They can do that at home. They come to you because they want to have a fuller experience. You are well equipped to give them that. As a heritage site you have an authentic, usually physical, link with the past. You may have a building, objects, documents, pictures or images. You will almost certainly have stories, drama, and characters. Hopefully, you have enthusiastic and knowledgeable staff and volunteers. Your job is to make all of these resonate with the visitor. Spend some time looking critically at your site, your people and your other resources to see how they can enliven the visitor experience.

## **Making the most of your site**

Consider your site, not just as it is now but as it could be. You need to find the locations and experiences that can create enduring memories. Look in particular for places that:

- offer the strongest link with people and stories
- are specific to your site and its story/message
- offer a direct sensory experience
- appeal to the imagination

These are likely to be the locations with the most potential for interpretation. You need to think about how the physical, sensory, or emotional experience they suggest can be enhanced.

When building up your understanding of how people experience your site, draw on what your visitors tell you (see *Section 4*). You can get this information from visitor surveys, on-the-spot interviews or from more informal contact with front of house staff, including guides.

**EXERCISE 10** tells you how to create a site experience map for your site.



## CASE STUDIES

### Using interpretation to enhance experiences

**The Irish National Heritage Park** near Wexford contains a collection of accurately reconstructed dwellings dating from Neolithic to Norman times. The interpretation aims to show how people lived in Ireland during those centuries. One way that this story is made vivid is by the presence of a living hearth in or near some of the dwellings. The fire makes the settlement into a home. At each settlement, the tour guide tends the fire, a small re-enactment that creates a direct sensory link with the past.





**The stadium tour at Croke Park, Dublin** recognises that the entrance from the players' tunnel onto the pitch has the potential to provoke the imagination and emotions of many visitors. Coming out of that entrance feels special and is completely specific to Croke Park. Clearly this is a pivotal location. The interpretation that emphasises the experience here is an audio track that recreates the powerful atmosphere that players face as they emerge through the tunnel on All Ireland Final day. The audio includes the sound of the players' studs on the tiles, the clapping of the guard of honour lining the tunnel and the cauldron of sound produced by the crowds in the stadium. The audio lasts 3-4 minutes, so is long enough for a group of 50 people to walk through the tunnel and all experience the magic. Visitors find this a very powerful and sometimes awe-inspiring experience.

### Making the most of your people

Your staff are likely to be the best (most accessible, most reliable, most enthusiastic and most versatile) resource you have for communicating about your place to visitors. Make full use of their knowledge, enthusiasm and skills.

Listen to the experiences of front line staff. They are likely to know what visitors ask, where they go and where they spend most time.

Encourage staff to contribute ideas for improving the visitors experience and understanding of your site.

Find out whether your staff has skills and interests that could contribute to a more active and vivid visitor experience. Craft skills, performance skills, first hand life experience, a fascination with gadgets, writing skills, teaching skills and many others can all enhance your interpretation. Make sure that your staff have the training and support that they need to make the most of their skills.



### CASE STUDY: DINGLE OCEAN WORLD AQUARIUM

## Good staff are the backbone of visitor experience

The Dingle Ocean World Aquarium has a reputation for having particularly enthusiastic, friendly and knowledgeable staff. The managers attribute this to a combination of factors:

- careful initial recruitment – they look for people who are friendly and outgoing with an interest in and preferably knowledge of marine life
- recognising and nurturing individual's talents and interests
- monitoring the interaction between staff and visitors
- providing induction training for all staff concentrating on communication skills. (All staff training is carried out 'in house'.)

The management deliberately set a positive example by carrying out a wide variety of tasks and always being visible on the site.



**CASE STUDY:  
ST. CANICE'S CATHEDRAL**

## Making the bishop's seat into an adventure

At **St. Canice's Cathedral in Kilkenny** good interpretive guiding skills and an important authentic object combine to create a significant and memorable experience for children. The children can have a direct physical link with the cathedral's tradition and history by sitting on the 12th century bishop's seat.

This powerful and evocative experience is enhanced because the guide builds drama and anticipation beforehand. Firstly she encourages the children to imagine the bishop and his entourage. She then pretends she is making a special, and slightly improper, concession in letting them sit on the stone seat. By engaging their emotions and imagination she ensures the contact with the seat is a highlight of their visit.

### Making the most of your resources

Look at your objects and artefacts and consider which could help bring the story of your site to life and make it into a memorable experience. Think about the following:

**Authentic objects** – Real things are a powerful aid to storytelling and experience. Do you have anything that relates to your message, or the people in it, that visitors can see or touch? Can the objects be involved in activities? If not, is there scope to make replicas?

**Pictures and photographs** – Images, particularly if they have people in them, can bring the past to life and act as a springboard for a range of activities such as discussions (for example, about what the painter/photographer wanted to show and whether that's 'true'), story-making, role-play and drama, comparing past and present etc. If you have a range of good archive images this might well lead you to choose interpretive media, including publications, graphic panels, audio-visual and Wi-Fi downloads, that can use them. Images can also be a great resource for activity based self-guided trails for children and families.

**Archives and documents** – These can be fascinating to the historian but dull and inaccessible to the layperson so must be used judiciously in interpretation. They can give an insight into the process of historical research and add authenticity and authority to the story. They can work well for Motivated visitors (see Target Audiences in *Section 4*) in a layered interpretation.

**Audio recordings** – Like photographs, these can add atmosphere and make the past more personal and vivid. They need to be used carefully in interpretation; always ensure sound quality is good (the standards for public use are higher than for archive purposes) and that tracks are shorter than 90 seconds. Audio can be broadcast or made available as an audio trail using a range of portable devices (see *Section 8*).

**Local memories** – The local community's relationship to your site can be a rich source of material for interpretation. If people in the community can remember significant events at your site you might collect this information and use it to create a community book or audio trail (or something else, dependent on the interests of local people). This can be used to inform interpretation that meets the needs of Inspired visitors (see Target Audiences in *Section 4*) by showing how the local heritage is connected to local life.

EXERCISE 11 asks you to identify what authentic resources you have that could bring your story to life.

EXERCISES 12 and 13 help you to review your site in the context of other attractions in your area.

## Telling the story with **local voices**

**South Tipperary County Museum** has carried out a number of projects over the last few years involving recording the reminiscences of local people.

- When the museum hosted a photographic exhibition 'Ireland at work', staff went to various groups in the community to record their memories. The resulting quotations were displayed alongside the photographs.
- Work on a new gallery based around the River Suir involved recording people who are particularly knowledgeable about the local industries, crafts, fishing and wildlife associated with the river. These will be part of an audio-visual presentation in the gallery.
- The museum is planning a new display of a collection of tools from an elderly local cooper (barrel-maker). They recorded him talking about his work and will include the recording alongside his tools.

The museum also runs a Reminiscence project with patients of the local hospital. Every week the curator takes a collection of objects from the Museum to the hospital. The objects relate to a topic, such as agriculture and domestic life, sport, music and entertainment etc. and are used to facilitate discussion amongst the patients. This gives the museum an opportunity to find out more about objects in the collection and the history of the local area that previously we may not have know much about. The Museum hosted reminiscence sessions during Bealtaine, the festival of creativity in older people.



## Connecting with **local skills and experience**

At Killybegs Maritime and Heritage Centre visitors can sit alongside and chat to workers making the famous hand-knotted Donegal carpets. As they share their stories, the workers' hands work fast and continuously on the carpet knots. They tell about the working conditions (the 'girls' used to sit in a line working on the same carpet, each girl having to work at the correct speed so that the whole carpet could be rolled forward together), how difficult the work was, about the carpets they made for famous locations and people, and about how the carpet making was a key part of the local community.

Visitors are fascinated to witness the skill involved in carpet making and to have this direct contact with the people who have done the work. "It brings the whole era to life again".

## SECTION 8

# PROJECTS: how will you do your interpretation?

*Really good interpretation involves both the analytic thinking covered in Sections 4 to 7 and an enlivening spark of creativity. Knowing your audiences, objectives, core message and resources etc is vital. But it's not the whole story. The best communication has flair and an energy that derives from the interpreters' love of the place and their passion to share its story.*

At this point, you and your staff can begin to have fun with what you know and how you could present it. This is the time to be adventurous and experiment with ideas. This does not need to come only from the site team; the wider local community and contractors (including artists, designers, performers, storytellers and writers) may all be able to contribute here.

Record all your ideas in EXERCISE 14.

## Choosing interpretation media for your site

There is no perfect medium for interpretation (if there was, we would all be doing it). Face-to-face guides are very often the best medium and other techniques are, to an extent, a substitute for their humanity, flexibility and responsiveness. If you have people who can interpret your site for you, value them, train them, invest in them and use them.

Whatever media you use you will need to review how well it is working regularly. Interpretation goes stale, regular visitors get bored and change will be needed.

Visitors have a range of needs, preferences and expectations – and these too change over time. The context of your site and what attracts visitors to the area may also change and your offer may well need to respond in the light of this.

Choosing the right media is important but remember that all media can be done well or badly. Maintaining your focus on the visitors and how this piece of interpretation enriches their experience of the site is vital throughout the production. Draw on the planning work you've done in the exercises to do this.



## Criteria for media selection

There is a wide range of interpretation media available so you need to think carefully about which will work best for you. Some of the most common and important criteria for choosing interpretation media are shown in the table below.

THINK ABOUT	IMPLICATIONS FOR MEDIA
<b>Susceptibility to vandalism</b>	<p>If your site is not staffed, not secure at night and/or vandalism is an issue in your area all fixed installations (including panels and sculptures) are likely to be vulnerable. Your options are to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>make installations inaccessible to vandals (e.g. by placing sculptures behind water).</li> <li>remove, or otherwise protect, installations when the site is not staffed.</li> <li>use other media.</li> <li>use vandal-resistant materials (none are perfect) and allow time and resources for cleaning (which should always be done promptly).</li> </ol>
<b>Frequency of visits</b>	<p>If a high proportion of your visitors come twice a year or more, you will need to ensure that the interpretation changes so your site appears fresh and interesting. This again means that you cannot rely solely on permanent fixed installations, such as exhibitions and panels. Your options are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>events – these work well if your audience is predominantly local</li> <li>variable interpretation – temporary panels, leaflets, quiz trails, podcasts and other audio can all be produced at relatively low cost to add variety to the interpretation.</li> </ol>
<b>Type of visitors (see Section 4)</b>	<p>If you have a high proportion of knowledgeable, Motivated visitors you may need to produce more detailed information. This should be in a portable form (printed or downloadable) that they can carry around the site and take home.</p> <p>If you have, or are trying to attract, family visitors interaction is important – quizzes, trails, role play, demonstrations and practical activities can all be good.</p> <p>A variety of media helps all visitors, including those with sensory impairments and different learning styles.</p>
<b>Nature and sensitivity of site</b>	<p>Conservation and aesthetic considerations are important at heritage sites. Your interpretation must enhance, not detract or distract from, the experience of the site. Fixed installations such as panels must be planned and designed with care and sensitivity. Your interpretation and the people using it must not damage the fabric of your site.</p>
<b>Other media already in use</b>	<p>All visitors will benefit from a range of media so it may be good to use a different medium for a new project. Consider how your existing interpretation would work for visitors who like learning through talking and listening, or looking at pictures, or through activity, or by reading, through thinking about things alone, or by being part of a group. Try to improve the storytelling power of your site for at least one of these groups with your new project.</p>
<b>Resources available (see Section 7)</b>	<p>This is about choosing a medium so that you can make the best use of what you have</p>
<b>Seasonality</b>	<p>You may want to choose media that allow you to change your interpretation for different seasons (e.g. for gardens, farming or wildlife sites) or in line with the calendar (for festivals etc.)</p>
<b>Staffed/ unstaffed site</b>	<p>If you have no staff on site, you will not be able to distribute items such as leaflets, activity packs or audio tours on site. Your best options are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>fixed installations, e.g. panels (where vandalism is not a problem)</li> <li>downloadable (Wi-Fi or Bluetooth) material</li> </ol>
<b>Staff resources/ availability</b>	<p>Face-to-face interpretation depends on the skills and availability of people.</p>
<b>Budget</b>	<p>Your finances will influence what you can achieve but (with the exception of very expensive options such as permanent exhibitions) it will usually influence the scale and quality of what you produce rather than your selection of medium.</p>

## Advantages and disadvantages of common interpretation media

Interpretation can use any communication medium. The following list includes the main categories of media, but it is not exhaustive, so do not let it limit your imagination. Remember too that interpretive media are often most effective when used in combination.

<p><b>1. Face-to-face interpretation:</b> includes all interpretation that involves someone talking to your visitor: guided tours, visiting people at work, watching demonstrations, story-telling, performance and re-enactment.</p> <p><b>Costs:</b> Medium to high, depending on whether using salaried staff or volunteers, mainly for salaries and staff training.</p>	<p><b>ADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• People like people. Visitors will warm to a good guide who gives a human dimension to the visit. A well-led tour can feel like being given a privileged and authentic 'insider's view'.</li> <li>• This is the most flexible and responsive interpretive medium. A good guide can adapt the style and content of the presentation to suit the visitors' needs and interests.</li> <li>• A good interpreter can help visitors understand complicated processes/issues that would be hard to convey on a panel or in print.</li> <li>• Allows for a wide range of events and can be very creative and entertaining.</li> <li>• Guided activities can be charged for and generate income.</li> <li>• They can provide employment.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires considerable management to maintain reliability and consistency.</li> <li>• Capacity may be an issue if this is the only form of interpretation. Need to be able to cope with very large and very small groups.</li> <li>• Needs commitment to maintain quality and develop new events and programmes.</li> <li>• Staff need support and training.</li> </ul>
<p><b>2. Outdoor panels:</b> a very common interpretation medium on outdoor sites, particularly unstaffed ones. Panels can give orientation information as well as interpretation.</p> <p><b>Costs:</b> Variable, from medium to high. Exterior grade panels can range from €500 to €1,500 per unit – depending on materials, artwork and mounting. Lamination is much cheaper but far less durable.</p>	<p><b>ADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Panels are always there – at places and times that people could not be.</li> <li>• They can carry pictures as well as text so can show what people cannot see (e.g. what the site looked like in the past, what is under the ground, what the people who lived here looked like).</li> <li>• They are good for highlighting significant points of interest about a site.</li> <li>• Can be combined with other media such as audio or sculpture to create interesting and evocative effects.</li> <li>• They can be very durable.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• They are inflexible and cannot be easily changed or updated.</li> <li>• They can be visually intrusive and detract from the atmosphere of the site.</li> <li>• Only about three people can look at them at one time.</li> <li>• They cannot guide people through a site. People will not remember a map from a panel – they will need something to carry with them.</li> <li>• They are limited in how much information they can convey.</li> <li>• People rapidly become bored by them – they do not work well for repeat visitors</li> <li>• Some materials do not weather well and may fade in direct sunlight. Condensation can be a problem in humid conditions.</li> <li>• Can attract vandals.</li> <li>• Require skilled design, illustration and scripting.</li> </ul>

### Prioritising your ideas for new projects

Hopefully you and your team will come up with a range of new and exciting ideas for interpreting your site. This is immensely important in creating lively and original interpretation. However, it is easy to get carried away by enthusiasm, so you must make sure that this creative phase of planning is followed by a reflective, analytic phase where you look critically at your ideas to see which best match your priorities.

EXERCISE 15 and 16 show you how to do this.

<p><b>3. Publications:</b> This includes anything that is printed for people to read during their visit, including guidebooks, information sheets, quizzes, colouring sheets, activity sheets, self-guided trails, treasure hunts etc.</p> <p><b>Costs:</b> Low to moderate – dependent upon size, number of colours used, paper type, print run etc.</p>	<p><b>ADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications can include a lot of information. (This can be a disadvantage if the publication is not well laid out, planned and designed).</li> <li>• Publications are portable and can be used all round the site.</li> <li>• They can combine pictures with words.</li> <li>• The visitor can read as much as he or she wants, when they want it (including after the visit).</li> <li>• They can generate income.</li> <li>• Visitors can take them home.</li> <li>• Simple publications can be produced in house.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Publications only appeal to people who enjoy reading.</li> <li>• You need to consider distribution and availability, particularly if there is no shop, visitor or other outlet on your site.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. Audio tours:</b> The options for producing portable audio tours on heritage sites have increased hugely in the last few years. Spoken commentaries can now be delivered through hired handsets or on visitors own personal devices (mobile phones, i-pods and MP3 players)</p> <p><b>Costs:</b> Very variable, depending on type of equipment used, number of stops on trail, number of recordings, complexity of sound track, how much work is done in-house. Could begin at €1,500 for MP3 download with basic soundtrack to €18,000 or above for more complex sound track on hired handsets.</p>	<p><b>ADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can be creative, evocative and dramatic especially when music, dialogue and good sound effects are used.</li> <li>• Can hold visitors' attention.</li> <li>• Can easily be multi-lingual.</li> <li>• Provides an alternative to the written word.</li> <li>• Rapidly changing technology is presenting interesting new opportunities, particularly for personal, handheld devices.</li> <li>• MP3 Downloads can be relatively cheaply and easily produced in house.</li> <li>• Can be up-dated.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Requires regular maintenance.</li> <li>• New technologies still require development and refinement before being a good solution for outdoor sites. Most systems are still somewhat erratic but this is likely to change.</li> <li>• Can diminish interaction within the visitor group.</li> <li>• Appeal of using mobile phones to gather information not yet proven (but this is likely to change).</li> </ul>
<p><b>5. Visitor centres and exhibitions:</b> This refers to the interpretive elements of a visitor centre, i.e. those parts that are concerned with telling visitors about the significance and interest of the place, not the retail, catering and toilet functions.</p> <p><b>Costs:</b> High to very high. For production and installation of a permanent heritage exhibition presentation, a budget of €2,500 per sq metre is advised, to cover structures, electrical, lighting, exhibits, (interactives/models etc.) AV, graphics, copyrights and dressing. Computer based interactives can range from €5,000 to €25,000 per unit. One museum grade showcase can cost between €6,000 and €8,000. Also, the development of a new exhibition is a significant logistical undertaking that requires careful and time-consuming planning and management.</p>	<p><b>ADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Can display artefacts and other three-dimensional materials.</li> <li>• Can be multi-sensory.</li> <li>• Can be interactive.</li> <li>• Can incorporate a range of media.</li> <li>• Can provide an all-weather facility.</li> <li>• Can include changing exhibitions.</li> <li>• Can be a good introduction to the site and the issues involved.</li> <li>• Can include retail and catering elements that generate income and create jobs.</li> </ul>	<p><b>DISADVANTAGES</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Require major investment and planning.</li> <li>• Require staffing for security and must be opened and closed every day.</li> <li>• Exhibits require careful and continuous maintenance. (Broken interactives cause considerable frustration!)</li> <li>• Only one or two people can usually use computers and similar interactives at a time. If they are popular, this may cause bottlenecks and frustration.</li> <li>• Not likely to appeal to repeat visitors after one or two visits.</li> <li>• Usually have a useful life of about 10 years before they need major refurbishment and updating.</li> <li>• Require resources for regular maintenance, updating and refurbishment.</li> </ul>

### Don't forget the 'big picture'

Remember that interpretation does not work in isolation but relies on other functions including promotion, welcome, orientation and customer care (see *Section 3*). When you change your interpretation this needs to be reflected in how you promote your site, and in the on-site orientation. All site staff needs to know about the new interpretation and be able to talk to visitors about it. You need to plan these changes alongside implementing your new interpretation.

## SECTION 9

# Is it working?

*Your interpretation must work for your visitor, your site and your business. You therefore need to assess what difference a new project has made, whether that is by increasing the number of visitors, attracting a new target audience, improving customer satisfaction or changing what people do or learn during their visit.*

## Evaluating your interpretation

Section 4 highlights the importance of surveying visitors as part of planning your interpretation. Evaluation is not a one-off process but should be part of your regular review of your operation so that you can identify new needs and weaknesses and how your visitors' expectations are changing. You should therefore plan to resurvey regularly.

When you introduce new interpretation you can assess visitors' reaction to it. Obviously it makes best sense to do this at a stage when you can still change the product in the light of your findings. Most face-to-face interpretation, including guided tours, can be regularly evaluated and adjusted according to visitors' responses. It is harder to change fixed interpretation such as panels or exhibitions. It is therefore wise to build a period of trialing into the development phase where draft designs and/or text are shown to the public to see if they understand them. This can be particularly valuable for the more complex items such as interactives or maps and diagrams.

You should also evaluate the impact of your interpretation when it is complete. This shows the impact it has had. It may not at this stage be possible to change the interpretation but the evaluation results will help you plan the next developments.

## Evaluation methods

You can use both 'direct' and 'indirect' evaluation methods. Direct evaluation includes all methods where you talk directly with visitors, such as face-to-face visitor surveys, focus groups, and accompanied visits. Indirect evaluation methods do not involve interacting with visitors and are usually based on observation and measurement.

### Direct evaluation methods

Talking to visitors is an obvious, and good way to find out what they are thinking and feeling about your site. You probably do this informally all the time but it is important to make sure you collect the information in a usable form (and that you then use it). You can do this in a number of ways but a simple visitor interview survey is probably the easiest.

Section 4 identified some valuable questions that you can ask your visitors when you are planning new interpretation. This will give you good baseline data. Asking the questions again after your interpretation is in place can help you measure its impact.







### CASE STUDY: HIGHLAND FOLK MUSEUM, SCOTLAND

## Monitoring visitor experience and motivated staff are the secrets of success

The **Highland Folk Museum** achieves extraordinary, and enviable, visitor satisfaction scores. Between 98% and 100% of visitors have a good or excellent time; more than 80% report having an excellent time. The Folk Museum team knows this because they are constantly surveying the visitor responses by using feedback forms and visitor observations throughout their complex site.

The team doesn't just systematically collect visitor data, they use it. Staff meet regularly to discuss feedback on each area of the Park and develop action plans for any areas that could be improved. Crucially this informs the staff training programme and the staff Manuals. The Highland Folk Museum recognises its staff as its greatest asset in building great visitors and engenders a strong information-based visitor focus throughout the business.

GOOD THINGS TO ASK YOUR VISITORS (AGAIN) ...	THIS TELLS YOU WHETHER YOUR NEW INTERPRETATION HAS ...
Who are you visiting with today? How often do you come here?	... changed your visitor profile, e.g. by attracting more families or encouraging more local people to visit. (This will not happen immediately, and will be influenced by your promotion.)
What do you plan to do here today? (asked at start of visit)	... changed people's perception of your site and what it offers (This again may take time and will be influenced by your promotion.)
What have you done here today?	... formed a memorable part of the visit.
How long have you spent here today?	... made a difference to how long visitors spend on site.
Do you think this visit was good value (for charging site)/worthwhile?	... added value to the visit experience.
Have you looked at any information (e.g. leaflets panels etc.) – if so which?	... made any impact.
Do you know ... ?	... delivered a key message.

**EXERCISE 16** gives some questions to start you off on surveying how your visitors feel about your site.

### Indirect evaluation

You do not always need to talk to people; you can learn a lot by observing and counting them. If, for instance, your new interpretation aimed to increase the number of family visitors in the school holidays, you can best measure the impact by counting the number of families through your gate. Similarly, if you want to know whether your interpretation is encouraging people to stay on site longer you can measure the duration of their visits and, if possible, record where they go and where they spend their time. Obviously the value of all these measurements depends on your having baseline data from before the interpretation was introduced.

How you evaluate will depend on the medium you are using.

**EXERCISE 17** suggests some simple observation techniques that you can use on your site.

- **Much of your interpretation is likely to be face-to-face.** The value of this can be measured by the proportion of visitors who stay for the entire tour, number of questions asked, and feedback from visitors (which can be obtained by interview or by a written questionnaire).
- **If you have put in new panels** you can calculate the proportion of people walking past who stop to look at them (this is called 'attraction power'). At a slightly higher level of sophistication you can record specific responses to the content such as talking about it, or looking for the features highlighted by the panel.
- **For leaflets** you can record how many are taken/sold and observe people using them on site, recording what proportion of users follow the suggested route, and for how long.



### CASE STUDY: LYME PARK

## New interpretation attracts more people into stately home

At **Lyme Park**, near Manchester, England, the National Trust were keen to encourage more visitors, especially families with children, to visit the house and gardens as well as the park. Because of the layout of the site and the name of the property many visitors were apparently unaware of the house gardens.

They created a range of new projects to address this: a free introductory CD for people to listen to in their cars as they drove down the (long) drive, a new interpretative exhibition about the house for a family audience, and a series of family activity trails about different aspects of the house and gardens.

The evaluation showed these initiatives have been very successful. A questionnaire survey of people who had received the free CD revealed that 60% of people who had not previously visited the house and gardens would now do so. Visitors to the house and gardens went up by 20% (compared to an 11% increase in the car park use). New memberships have gone up by 24% including a significant increase in family memberships.

### Next steps for Sharing our Stories

We hope this Manual encourages you to take practical steps to create excellent visitor experiences at your site. If you haven't done so already, work through the exercises at the front.

Then it's over to you and your team!

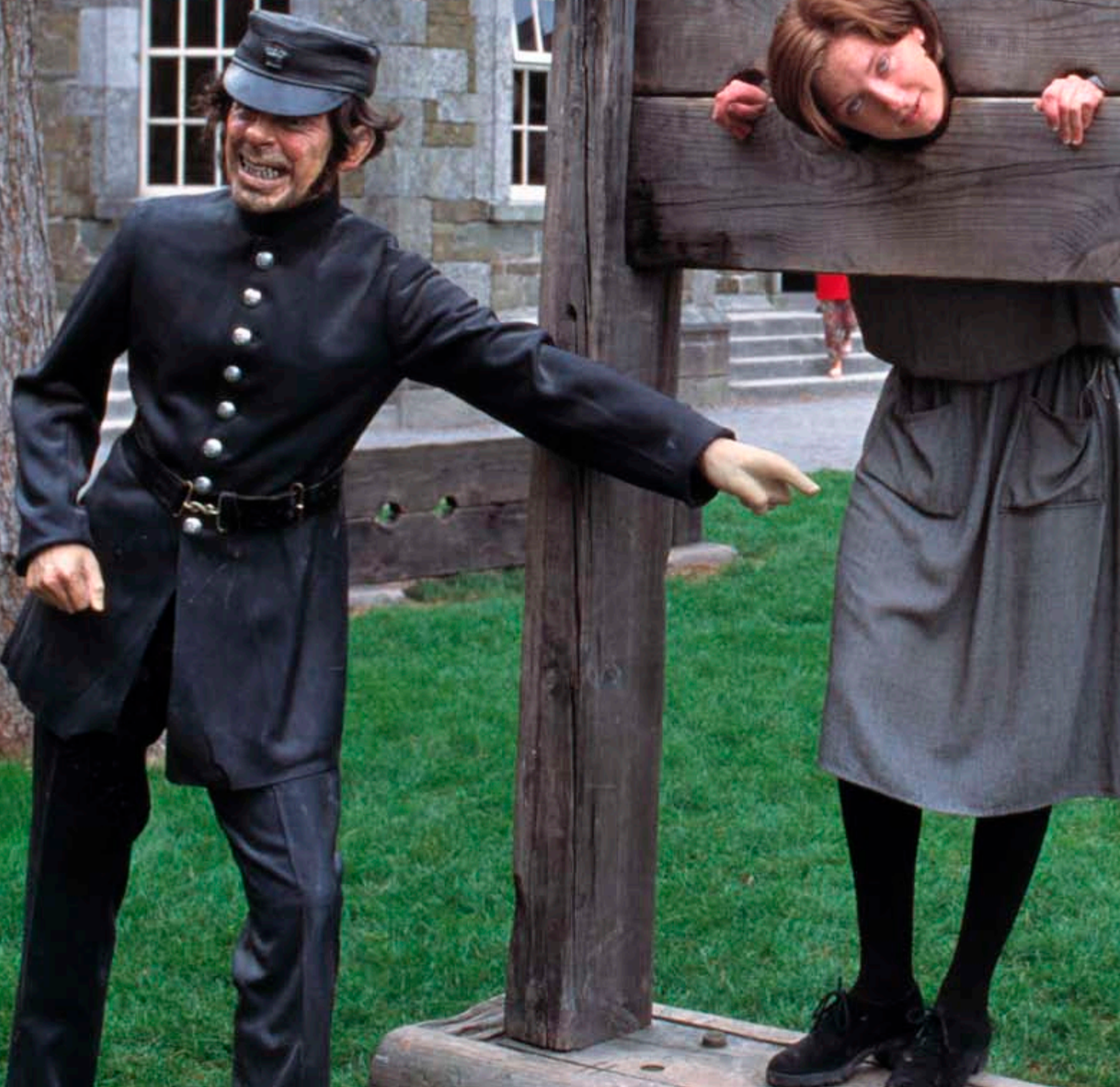
Look at what you've learned and the ideas you have generated from this Manual and harness them to the passion and knowledge of your staff and the real life experience of your site. With this combination you can make your site a place that people will love visiting and want to talk about afterwards.

Most of all, keep smiling. Remember to enjoy yourself and to appreciate the specialness of your site. If you do, your visitors will too.

Good luck!



**Our visitors need easy access to our culture and heritage – interpretation can facilitate this and make their visit worthwhile, meaningful and memorable.**



# Resources

## Books/Web resources

### Cultural Tourism – Making it work for you: A Strategy for Cultural Tourism in Ireland

Fáilte Ireland

[www.failteireland.ie/Business-Supports/Tourism-Sector-Development](http://www.failteireland.ie/Business-Supports/Tourism-Sector-Development)

### Free online Business Tools for Irish Tourism Businesses

[www.businesstools.failteireland.ie](http://www.businesstools.failteireland.ie)

### Management of Interpretive Sites

Tim Merriman and Lisa Brochu, 2005, InterPress

### Creating Great Visitor Experiences – A Guide for Museum, Parks, Zoos, Gardens and Libraries

Stephanie Weaver, 2007, Left Coast Press

### Interpretive planning – The 5-M Model for Successful Planning Projects

Lisa Brochu, 2003, InterPress

### Signs, Trails and Wayside Exhibits: Connecting People and Places

Michael Gross, Ron Zimmerman and Jim Buchholz, (3rd Edition) 2006, UW-SP Foundation Press

### Designing Interpretive Signs – Principles in Practice

Gina Moscardo, Roy Ballantyne and Karen Hughes, 2007, Fulcrum

### Walking and Interpretation Toolkit

Brecon Beacons National Park

[www.breconbeacons.org/communities/community-walking-and-interpretation-toolkit](http://www.breconbeacons.org/communities/community-walking-and-interpretation-toolkit)

### Exhibit Labels – an interpretive approach

Beverly Serrell, Altamira

### Planning for People in Museum Exhibitions

Kathleen McLean, 1993, Association of Science-Technology Centers

## Disability guidance

### Designing Exhibitions to Include People with Disabilities

Nolan Gail, 1997, NMS Publishing

### See it Right: Royal National Institute of the Blind Guidelines

[www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public\\_seeitright.hcsp](http://www.rnib.org.uk/xpedio/groups/public/documents/PublicWebsite/public_seeitright.hcsp)

### Am I making Myself Clear; Mencap's guidelines for accessible writing

[www.mencap.org.uk/download/making\\_myself\\_clear.pdf](http://www.mencap.org.uk/download/making_myself_clear.pdf)

### National Disability Authority/Centre for Excellence in Universal Design

25 Clyde Road

Ballsbridge

Dublin 4

Tel: 01 6080400

Web: [www.nda.ie](http://www.nda.ie)

### The National Learning Network Ltd. provides training on communicating with people with disabilities

Roslyn Park

Sandymount

Dublin 4

Tel: 01 2057200

Web: [www.nln.ie](http://www.nln.ie)

## Sources of advice

The following are your local Fáilte Ireland contacts and your first port of call:

### Fáilte Ireland Dublin

Amiens Street

Dublin 1

Tel: 01 8847136

Contact: *Maeve McKeever*

### Fáilte Ireland East & Midlands

Dublin Road

Mullingar

Co. Westmeath

Tel: 044 9348761

### Fáilte Ireland South East

The Quay

Waterford

Tel: 051 875823

### Fáilte Ireland South West

Grand Parade

Cork

Tel: 021 4255100

### Fáilte Ireland West

Forster Street

Galway

Tel: 091 537700

### Fáilte Ireland North West

Temple Street

Sligo

Tel: 071 9161201

*also*

### Shannon Development

Shannon Town Centre

Shannon

Co. Clare

Tel: 061 361555

### Dublin Tourism

Suffolk Street

Dublin 2

Tel: 01 6057700

The following are possible sources of funding for the development of interpretation:

### National Lottery Beneficiary Fund

### The Heritage Council

### Irish Leader Network

### Fáilte Ireland

### Culture Ireland

### Arts Council

### County Enterprise Boards

### Local Authority Departments

### Business Organisations

**Volunteering Ireland** could also provide support in sourcing volunteers to help in development and interpretation at your site.

The following are contacts for some suppliers of services specifically relating to Interpretation Planning and Design.

Please note that this list is indicative only, and is not intended in any way to be a comprehensive listing of all potential suppliers in the marketplace. Inclusion on this listing does not imply endorsement by Fáilte Ireland, and sites should undertake their normal checks and procedures before entering into business with any potential supplier of services.

### Interpretative Planners

#### Scroope Design

Courtmacsherry  
West Cork  
Tel: 023 8853930  
Web: [www.scroope.com](http://www.scroope.com)

#### TellTale

The Steps  
2 Lightwood Road  
Buxton SK17 7BP  
Tel: 00 44 1298 70376  
Web: [www.telltale.co.uk](http://www.telltale.co.uk)

### Designers

#### Caroline O'Connor Designs

Ballintlea  
Ventry  
Co. Kerry  
Tel: 066 9159892

#### Wendy Williams Design

10 Charleville Mall  
North Strand  
Dublin 1  
Tel: 01 8561310

### Audio Tours

#### In Hand Guides

14 Castlepoint Court, Camden Rd,  
Crosshaven  
Cork  
Tel: 021 4833720  
Web: [www.inhandguides.ie](http://www.inhandguides.ie)

### Audio Trails

20 New Street  
Higham  
Derbyshire  
DE55 6BP  
Web: [www.audiotrails.co.uk](http://www.audiotrails.co.uk)

### Acoustiguide Ltd.

2-3 North Mews  
London  
WC1N 2JP  
Tel: 00 44 20 7269 5150  
Web: [www.acoustiguide.com](http://www.acoustiguide.com)

### Antenna Audio Limited

85 Great Eastern Street  
London  
EC2A 3HY  
Tel: 00 44 203 365 8600  
Web: [www.antennaaudio.com](http://www.antennaaudio.com)

### Panel Manufacturers

#### Shelley Signs Limited

Eaton-on-Tern  
Market Drayton  
Shropshire TF9 2BX  
Tel: 00 44 8453 705575  
Web: [www.shelleysigns.co.uk](http://www.shelleysigns.co.uk)

#### Fitzpatrick Woolmer Design & Production Ltd

Unit 7  
Lakeside Park  
Neptune Close  
Rochester  
Kent  
ME2 4LT  
Tel: 00 44 1634 711 771  
Web: [www.fwdp.co.uk](http://www.fwdp.co.uk)

#### Pryorsign

Unit 3a  
Denby Way  
Hellaby  
Rotherham  
S.Yorkshire  
S66 8HR  
Tel: 00 44 1709 700 408  
Web: [www.pryorsign.co.uk](http://www.pryorsign.co.uk)

### Exhibition Designers

#### Martello Design

Rockvale  
Windsor Terrace  
Sandy Cove  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: 01 2844668  
Web: [www.martellomedia.com](http://www.martellomedia.com)

### Exhibition Graphic Design

#### Propeller

Letteragh House  
Rahoon  
Galway  
Tel: 091 522786

#### Design Factor

8 Cormac Quay  
Ormeau Road  
Belfast  
BT7 2JD  
Tel: 048 90239911  
Web: [www.thedesignfactor.com](http://www.thedesignfactor.com)

### Audio Visual Design and Production

#### X Communications

Morrison Chambers  
32 Nassau Street  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 67070662  
Web: [www.xcommunications.ie](http://www.xcommunications.ie)

#### Fitting Image

21 Bluebell Business Park  
Old Naas Road  
Dublin 12  
Tel: 01 4602112  
Web: [www.fittingimage.ie](http://www.fittingimage.ie)

#### Integrated Circles Ltd.

Unit A  
91 Ewell Road  
Surbiton  
Surrey  
KT6 6AH  
Tel: 00 44 845 310 5757  
Web: [www.integrated-circles.com](http://www.integrated-circles.com)

### Artefact Replicas

#### Millhouse Art

Kilbride  
Co. Wicklow  
Tel: 0404 48185

### Demonstration Models

#### Shadow Creations

14N Greenogue Industrial Estate  
Rathcoole  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: 01 4124744  
Web: [www.shadowcreations.ie](http://www.shadowcreations.ie)

#### Northcross

Northcross Works  
Macmerry Industrial Estate  
Macmerry  
East Lothian  
Edinburgh  
EH33 1RD  
Tel: 00 44 1875 617500

#### H&H Sculptures

Unit 2, Sherwood Court  
Thurston Road  
Lewisham  
London  
SE13 7SD  
Tel: 00 44 0208 2971474

### Conservation

#### Paper Conservation Studio

Tower Complex  
Pearse St  
Dublin 2  
Tel: 01 6775655

### Historical Research and Copywriting

#### Dr Alicia St. Leger

Enterprise House  
36 Mary St  
Cork  
Tel: 021 4310043

### Copywriters

The following website can provide a listing of copywriters: [www.iapi.ie](http://www.iapi.ie)

### Graphic Production

#### Miguel Foto Lab Ltd

The Old School House  
Bishop Street  
Limerick  
Tel: 061 414033  
Web: [www.miguelphotodisplay.com](http://www.miguelphotodisplay.com)

#### Uppercase

7 Pope's Quay  
Cork  
Tel: 021 4211300  
Web: [www.uppercase.ie](http://www.uppercase.ie)

#### Kernow Signs

Cloonalison  
Charlestown  
Co. Mayo  
Tel: 087 1275675

#### Kingram Graphics

Shaw's Lane  
Bath Avenue  
Dublin 4  
Tel: 01 6601369

#### Uptime Printing

Unit 5  
Bypass Business Park  
Bandon  
Cork  
Web: [www.uptimeprinting.ie](http://www.uptimeprinting.ie)

### Specialist Lighting Design

#### Lighting Design Associates

13 Castlepark Rd  
Sandy Cove  
Co. Dublin  
Tel: 01 2805386  
Web: [www.lightingdesign.ie](http://www.lightingdesign.ie)

### Sutton Vane Associates

Britannia House  
1 Glenthorne Road  
London  
W6 0LH  
Tel: 00 44 20 85639370  
Web: [www.sva.co.uk](http://www.sva.co.uk)

#### Graham Festenstein

Myrtle Cottage  
The Street  
Thurlow  
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Tel: 00 44 1440 783709  
Web: [www.design-light.co.uk](http://www.design-light.co.uk)

### Arts Professionals

Fáilte Ireland is developing a new cultural database which will be available to tourism and cultural providers in Ireland. The aim of the database is to offer individual professionals working in the arts, such as musicians, actors and performers, a platform to promote their services while simultaneously making this information easily available to other providers involved in tourism, such as heritage attractions, who might wish to animate their premises using music, drama, literature etc. The database will be available in an online format on the Fáilte Ireland website [www.failteireland.ie](http://www.failteireland.ie) from the end of May 2010.

Finally, the following websites are also useful sources for lists of various consultants and contractors in the area of interpretation: [www.ahi.org.uk/www/suppliers](http://www.ahi.org.uk/www/suppliers) [www.museumsassociation.org/suppliers](http://www.museumsassociation.org/suppliers)

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While every attempt has been made to ensure information in this document is accurate, we are not responsible for any errors or omissions, but where these are pointed out, we will ensure that future editions are rectified.



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