



IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST

A TOOLKIT FOR STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

How to help visitors experience your story

CONTENTS

WE AIM TO MAKE IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST THE MOST ENGAGING, ENJOYABLE AND ACCESSIBLE CULTURAL HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE IN EUROPE

This toolkit shows how to deliver the brand promise to your visitors, on your site, with your people.

STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

7

How to ... use stories about people

16

How to ... plan and deliver storytelling interpretation

19

STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION AND EXPERIENCE

20

How to ... make your storytelling interpretation into an experience to remember

22

SELF-GUIDED HERITAGE TRAILS

24

How to ... create a storytelling self-guided trail

32

STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION IN COMMUNITIES

34

How to ... create a community storytelling interpretation project

38

MEDIA FOR STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

40

How to ... create storytelling interpretation for multi-lingual audiences

43

How to ... create a storytelling panel

47

How to ... plan your storytelling interpretation

54

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST IS ALL ABOUT GREAT STORYTELLING EXPERIENCES

Ireland's Ancient East welcomes visitors from across the world to Ireland and to our story experiences.



Image © Irish National Heritage Park

Costumed guide at the Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford

Our skilled and hospitable storytelling changes the way people experience our places, our past and our people.

It creates memories that touch people and that they will remember forever.

To create these memories we need to connect with the visitor by sharing the human story behind our great heritage. To develop great visitor experiences we need to develop our sites and plan how we use them to bring these stories to life. Within Ireland's Ancient East we use storytelling interpretation to do this.

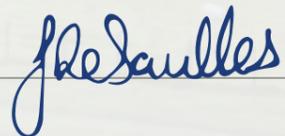
WHAT IS STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION?

Our vision is to make Ireland's Ancient East the most enjoyable, engaging and accessible culture experience in Europe.

For us to be successful we must put visitor motivations at the heart of everything we do. This means we must evolve our experiences from being heartfelt but earnest, to being enjoyable and engaging.

Over the last eighteen months Fáilte Ireland has worked with industry partners and stakeholders to create new or enhanced visitor experiences for Ireland's Ancient East. We have created this toolkit to share our learnings with you and to show you how to implement storytelling interpretation at your site. This toolkit is for visitor-facing businesses and communities with stories to tell. Attraction managers, tourism businesses, accommodation providers, interpretation planners and designers will all find this guidance useful. The Ireland's Ancient East brand promises the best storytelling experience in the world. This toolkit shows how to find your best stories and how to tell them in the best way in the best places, by using your people, your site and a range of communication media creatively.

I look forward to continuing our shared journey to develop Ireland's Ancient East into a world class holiday destination.



Jenny De Saulles,
Head of Ireland's Ancient East
at Fáilte Ireland



Storytelling interpretation uses storytelling to connect people to the places they visit.

Storytelling interpretation builds meaningful relationships between places and communities and the people who visit them. It does this by focusing on the visitors and being rooted in authentic first-hand experience of a place.

Storytelling interpretation is engaging, entertaining and accessible. It creates powerful encounters and leaves memories that last a lifetime.

Storytelling interpretation requires careful planning and skilful delivery. This toolkit explains how to do that.

It's not just the story you want to tell, it's the story your visitor wants to hear.

Storytellers always have their eye on the audience and how they are reacting. Creating enjoyable storytelling interpretation requires the same tight focus on your visitors.

Fortunately we know the visitors to Ireland's Ancient East well. We know they like:

- to be independent and wander off the beaten track
- to discover unusual and stimulating experiences
- to 'connect with the past'
- to delve deeper into history and culture
- to 'get under the skin' of a place
- to meet Irish people, and share the Irish way of life

Good storytelling interpretation will deliver all of these.

IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST SIGNATURE STORIES

With help from many people across the territory, we have created a series of Signature Stories for Ireland's Ancient East. These stories are shaping everything we do.

- Ancient Ireland
- Castles And Conquests
- High Kings and Heroes
- Big Houses and Hard Times
- Maritime Gateway
- Ireland's Mystical Waterway
- Sacred Ireland
- The Sport of Kings
- Vikings

You can read the stories on irelandsancienteast.com or download them from irelandscontentpool.com. Find out more about how to use them from Ireland's Ancient East: A toolkit for business (available to download from failteireland.ie/IrelandsAncientEast)

WHY IS STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION IMPORTANT IN IRELAND'S ANCIENT EAST?

Stories are welcoming and hospitable.

Since earliest times, stories have offered travellers a warm introduction to a place and its people. Ireland's Ancient East uses storytelling interpretation to do the same.

Storytelling interpretation:

- focuses on the audience, what they know and what they are interested in
- highlights people, actions and relationships rather than just dates and factual details
- creates empathy between people from different times, cultures and places
- creates atmosphere and builds identity and 'sense of place'

Storytelling interpretation creates accessible, enjoyable and engaging experiences.



Hook Lighthouse, Co. Wexford

Image © Hook Heritage

Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale



Storytelling by the fire, Castell Henllys Iron Age Fort, Wales

STORIES CAN LINK PLACES

Some stories run across the whole of Ireland's Ancient East.

As visitors travel through Ireland's Ancient East they will meet Vikings, monastic orders, Normans and great families. They will meet them more than once, at different places. This will make Ireland's Ancient East more coherent, meaningful and memorable.

Look for opportunities to link your business to others. Tell your visitors where they can find out more about your stories. Signpost them to nearby attractions and businesses.

The physical features of the 'lush green landscape' such as hills, rivers and soils, have influenced many aspects of people's lives here, now and in the past. These can make good links.

Ireland's Ancient East is a landscape of places, experiences and stories.



Images © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

Guide and sculpture telling the story of Cell Uachtair Lamhann, or 'The Church of the Eight Hands', Holycross Abbey, Co. Tipperary

ARE THE STORIES TRUE?

Well, that just depends ... on what you are trying to do and the context.

Storytelling interpretation can include: narratives based solidly on well-researched facts, myths, legends and other old stories, word of mouth, and local gossip or jokes.

What is important is that your visitors always know what sort of story you are telling.



Brownshill Dolmen, Co. Carlow

TELLING STORIES IN YOUR BUSINESS

NOT JUST RECITING HISTORY

The storytelling interpretation that characterises the essence of Ireland's Ancient East will:

- emphasise people and their stories
- make good use of drama and emotion
- have an informal, personal style and tone
- use (appropriate) humour
- have a strong structure – a good beginning, a well-structured middle and a memorable ending
- include the past and the present
- link to other stories

The single most important technique for changing history into a storytelling experience is to focus on the people.

Storytelling interpretation is dramatic and uses the emotions and actions of the protagonists.



Hill of Uisneach, Co. Westmeath



Hook Lighthouse, Co. Wexford



Youghal Clock Gate Tower, Co. Cork

Image left © Uisneach Management Ltd. | Image top right © Hook Heritage | Image bottom right © Youghal Socio-Economic Development Group Ltd.

FOCUS ON CHARACTERS

Using characters (real or imagined) as a vehicle for the story is a powerful technique.

Using individuals to highlight the wider story:

- attracts and engages people's attention
- encourages empathy and imagination
- creates compelling and memorable narratives
- gives your interpretation a voice and a perspective

Characters make a story. Storytelling interpretation focuses on people, their actions, emotions and experiences.

An individual perspective can be used to recount a larger history.

Two or more individuals can share the narrative creating a richer and more gripping drama that highlights differences and tensions.

Characters can link people, past and present, who were connected to a place over time.

Sometimes you will need to look hard for your characters.

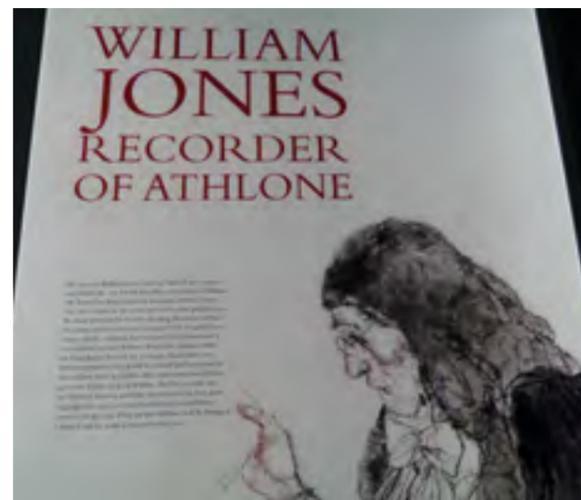
It may be that what you want people to remember is the architecture or the plants or the geomorphology. That is fine – but finding some character-driven stories will help make that more memorable.

So, for example, when looking at architecture, talk about the architects, the sponsors and their visions and influences.

Talk about gardens through garden designers, plant hunters, gardeners, families and their experiences and motivations.

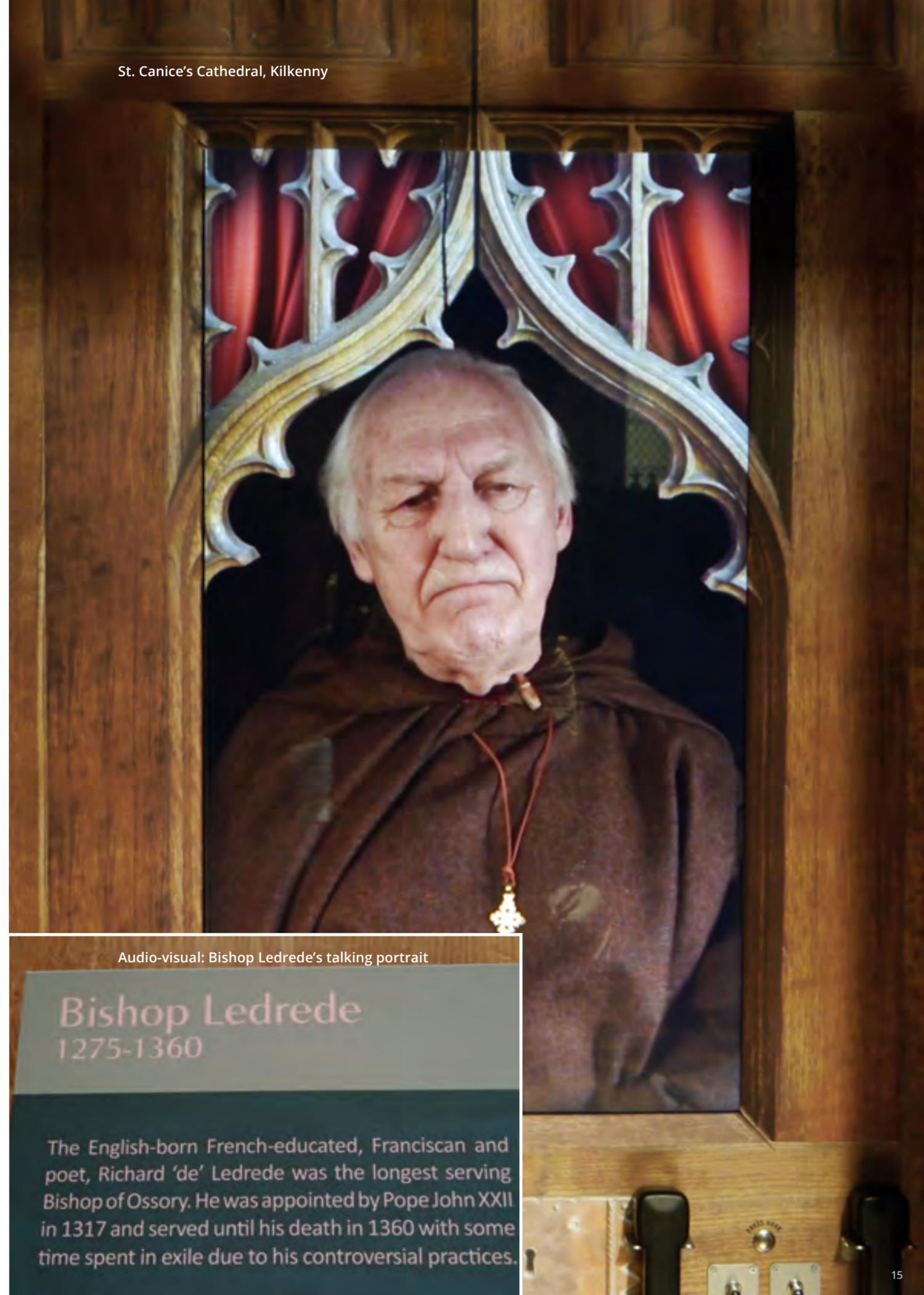
Explore vernacular architecture through the builders and the people who lived there.

Different sides of the story at Athlone Castle



All images © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny



Audio-visual: Bishop Ledrede's talking portrait

Bishop Ledrede 1275-1360

The English-born French-educated, Franciscan and poet, Richard 'de' Ledrede was the longest serving Bishop of Ossory. He was appointed by Pope John XXII in 1317 and served until his death in 1360 with some time spent in exile due to his controversial practices.

HOW TO ... USE STORIES ABOUT PEOPLE

Focusing on people influences everything:

1. the **research**, shifting the emphasis to people rather than dates
2. the **theming**, so that people are embedded in the big ideas and messages that underpin the interpretation
3. the **graphic and 3-D design**, so that it reflects the mood and atmosphere of the story
4. the **title**, so that it promises story, people and action
5. the **introduction**, so that people are featured from the beginning
6. the **text writing**, so that the focus is on the action and the protagonists
7. the **illustrations**, so that they include people

Ros Tapestry, Co. Wexford



*Spring surprised us with a yelp of daisies
Defiant as a terrier guarding his home ground
We planted seed in the cleft of drills
Slimy with earthworms.*

Kerry Writers' Museum, Listowel, Co. Kerry

MAKE YOUR STORIES ENJOYABLE

Telling stories is part of creating a great experience.

Make your stories inviting to your visitors. Remember they are on holiday. This could be their first visit to Ireland and they may have very little background knowledge.

USE EMOTION AND EMPATHY

Great storytelling triggers our imaginations so we 'see' and 'feel' the events in the story. Storytelling interpretation does the same. It makes invasions, buildings, changes in agriculture or water supply, into vivid events. It enables us to imagine ourselves living in the past and experiencing what we now call history.

KEEP IT FRIENDLY

Storytelling interpretation does not look or sound like a history book. Think of it as a novel, even a graphic novel.

It should have an informal, conversational tone. This is as true for print and audio as it is for face-to-face.

Storytelling interpretation uses illustrations not technical drawings.

Storytelling interpretation should feel personal. You can use different formats such as letters, diaries, video diaries.

Storytelling interpretation can be humorous and playful or serious, sombre and respectful.



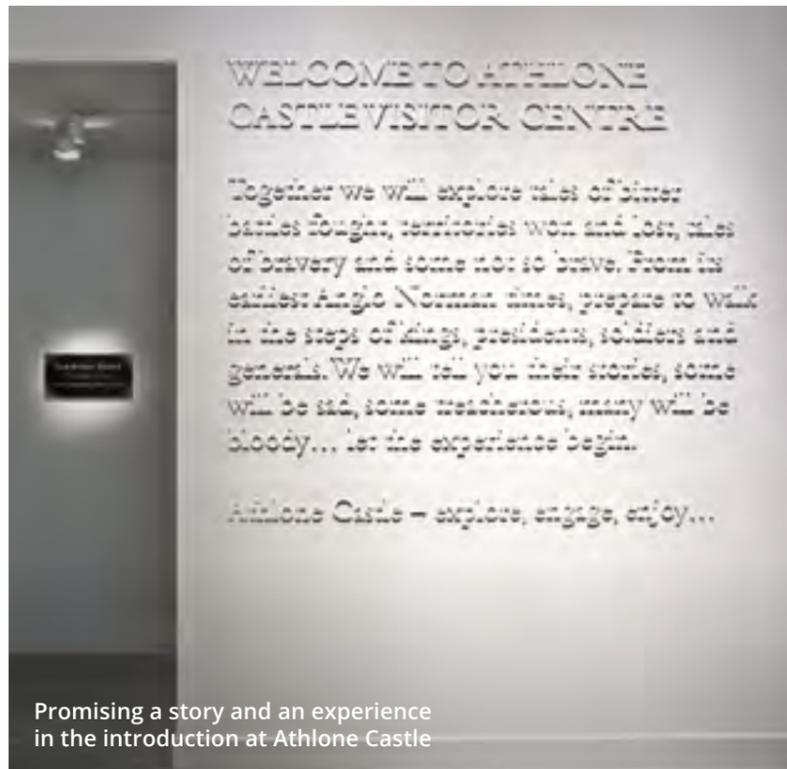
Using direct speech, informal language and a commissioned photograph gives a personal angle to the story of the sustainable heating system. Calke Abbey, UK

Image top & bottom © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

Image © Alex McNeill/CDA



STRUCTURE IN STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION



WELCOME TO ATHLONE CASTLE VISITOR CENTRE

Together we will explore tales of bitter battles fought, territories won and lost, tales of bravery and some not so brave. From its earliest Anglo Norman times, prepare to walk in the steps of kings, presidents, soldiers and generals. We will tell you their stories, some will be sad, some treacherous, many will be bloody ... let the experience begin!

Athlone Castle - explore, engage, enjoy ...

Image © Corin Bishop

Promising a story and an experience in the introduction at Athlone Castle

Storytelling interpretation, like all storytelling, is characterised by a well-planned structure.

It will have:

- **A great beginning** that hooks people into the story by building anticipation and curiosity. This will usually set the scene and give 'the point' of the story.
- **A continuous thread** that runs through the interpretation and links back to the point of the story.
- **Dramatic highlights** that form compelling moments and contrast with the quieter parts of the story.
- **A strong conclusion** that leaves visitors with something important and memorable to think about, a 'twist in the tale'.

Structure is important because visitors do not read in sequence.

They often do not want to be organised so will read or listen to interpretation in the order they choose.

Good storytelling interpretation will be designed to attract people's attention to the most important elements. It will be organised to give all visitors the bare bones of the story.

Images © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

HOW TO ...

PLAN AND DELIVER STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

Whether you are planning an event, writing a script for your guide, or producing a leaflet, a panel or a website, these tips will help to strengthen your storytelling.

Planning

1. Develop your understanding of the story. Draw a storyboard, write dialogues. Experiment with telling the story to visitors in different ways and watch their reaction.
2. Decide what the main point of your story is, who the characters are and where there is drama, humour or interest.
3. Think about how you can use your site to tell the story. Match locations to the characters and events.

Delivery

4. Make sure that you have a great beginning to the story that raises people's expectations. Promise them a story of drama, heroism, endurance, mystery, magic, tragedy, romance, betrayal - whatever fits.
5. Tell your stories in pictures. Use images of action with people in them.

6. Give people contact with objects to create a direct link to people from the past.
7. Evoke the senses, creating vivid images of the place in the reader's mind.
8. Use evocative language that stirs empathy.
9. Use images of real people to emphasise that this is a 'true story'.
10. Find direct quotations to create an authentic sense of people telling their own story.
11. Include questions and mystery - the best stories have some gaps in them that leave us intrigued.
12. Keep the style personal - in words, images and graphics. If there are opportunities for humour, use them.

Vikings through a peephole at the Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford



STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION AND EXPERIENCE

Storytelling interpretation is place-based. It locates the main points of the story carefully within the site and the visitors' journey through it.

Storytelling interpretation in Ireland's Ancient East is about being where the story happened as the tales come to life around you. It is stepping into the story, breathing it, touching it and feeling it.

This animates the place and turns the story into an experience. It can build an unforgettable relationship between our visitors and the great (and small) places and events of Ireland's history.

The ramparts of Athlone Castle are the best place in the world to understand the events of the Siege of Athlone. As you look over the River Shannon, facing the far bank, the ford and the footings of the old bridge, you see the Williamite army under the redoubtable de Ginkel, as clearly as if they stood there. You feel the surging hope of the castle defenders and the crush of defeat. You understand the impact of that day on the history of Ireland because it seems like you were there. After that, you will never forget Athlone.



Your guide on the Hill of Uisneach says that you are at the heart of Ireland. He points across the wide open landscape – that way to Knowth and Newgrange, this way to Cruachan Ai, round again, and again to Tara. He directs your gaze to the paths in the land and tells you how they came. You see them, from 4,000 or more years ago, coming to the place where you are standing. Time shrinks. You are ready to hear the old stories of Eriu and Lugh ... and the storyteller begins.



Hill of Uisneach, Co. Westmeath

Image © Uisneach Management Ltd.

Hill of Uisneach, Co. Westmeath



Storytelling interpretation uses the place to tell the story vividly.

Storytelling interpretation creates great, place-based storytelling experiences in houses, in village streets, on hills, in shops, on farms, at ancient monuments and at many other places.

- Big stories may demand a landscape-scale vista.
- Stories of individuals may be told quietly in small rooms.

Image © Athlone Arts & Tourism

Image © Uisneach Management Ltd.

HOW TO ...

MAKE YOUR STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION INTO AN EXPERIENCE TO REMEMBER

Plan the experience of the interpretation in detail.

Make the most of your place

1. Break down your story into incidents and match each to a place-based activity. These 'activities' may be quite minor things, such as looking at a view, unlocking a door or climbing some stairs.
2. Consider the mood of your story. Is it humorous, tragic, heroic or romantic? Choose places where you can heighten this mood.
3. Look for specific places that relate to people in the story. Choose places that they would have used.
4. Ensure that people with restricted mobility can access as much of the experience as possible. Offer alternative experiences if necessary.



The Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford, recreates historic environments and invites visitors to experience activities like gold-panning and rock-carving

Engage the senses

5. Always aim for multi-sensory interpretation that uses sight, sound and touch. This will be particularly helpful for visitors with sensory impairments.
6. Add smell and taste experiences wherever possible. This may be harder to do but can be very powerful.
7. Enhance and focus the dominant sense by directing and enriching the experience.
 - Add background sounds to an audio tour.
 - Give people specific things to look for e.g. finding patterns or objects, looking for places in a view.



Images © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

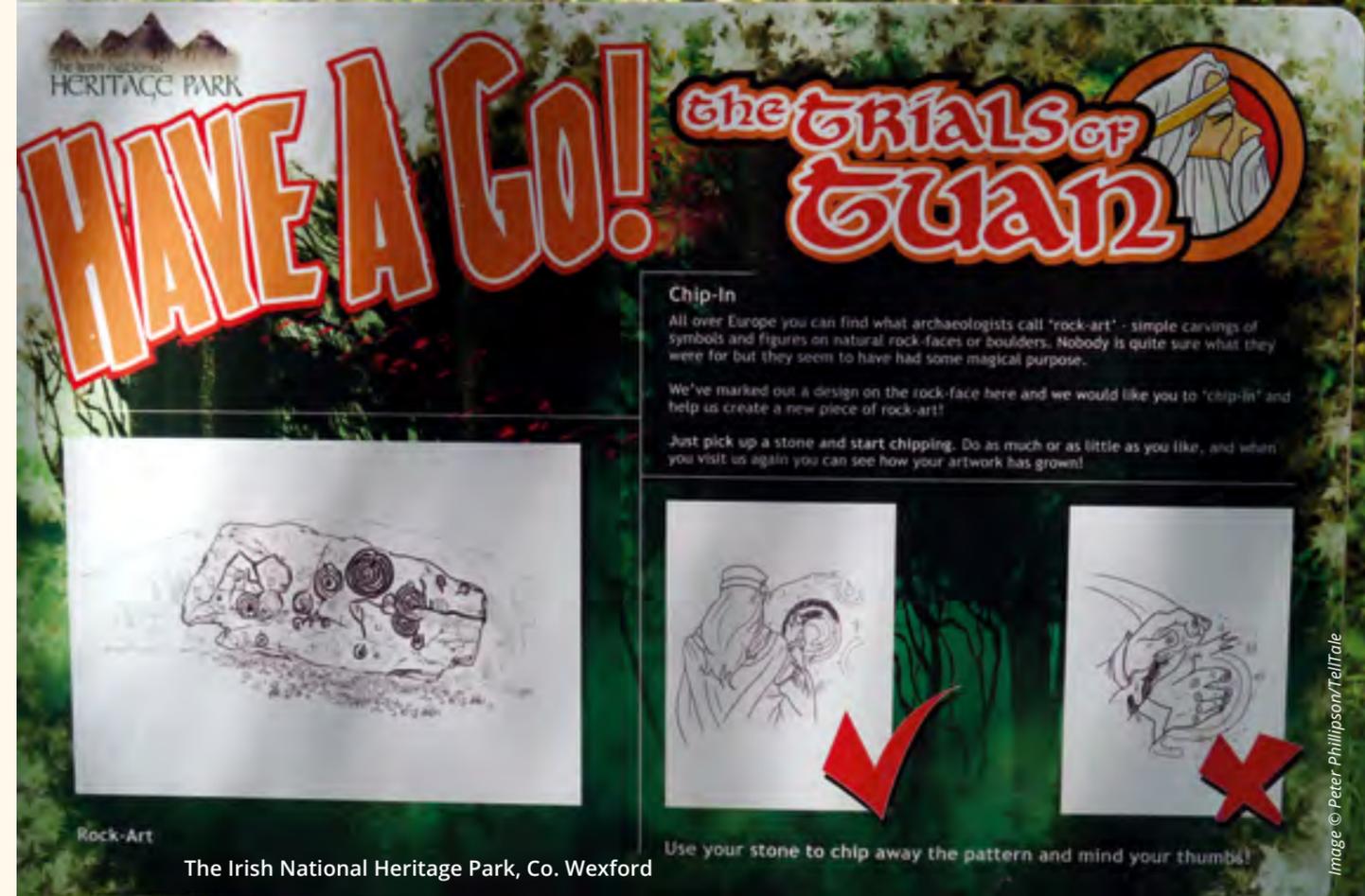


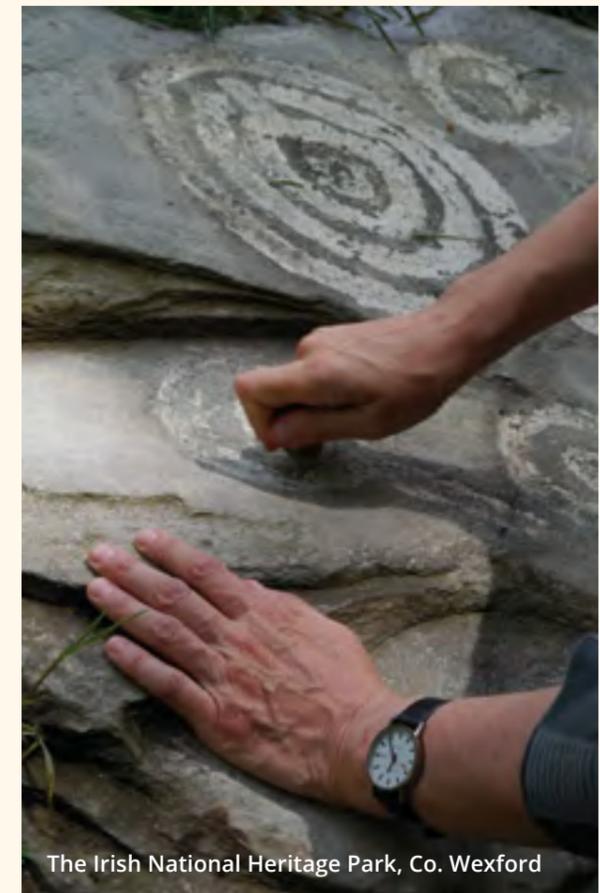
Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

Create action and interaction

8. Give people things to do. Even very simple things like the opportunity to touch an object can change the experience profoundly.
9. Have props for people to carry, use or wear.
10. If you are demonstrating any activity, find ways that people can join in.

Create a conversation

11. Be friendly. Tour guides should be remembered as warm, enthusiastic people who loved telling us about the place. (Panels and other non-personal media need to work exceptionally hard to create a similar effect!)
12. Ask people speculative questions that get them thinking about the people in your story.
13. Build surprises, or even mild shocks, into the visit.



The Irish National Heritage Park, Co. Wexford

Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

SELF-GUIDED HERITAGE TRAILS

Heritage trails should help visitors experience a place through well-told stories.

Every heritage trail will be different, depending on the story, the place and the audience.

Good heritage trails require careful planning and design.



Guided? Or self-guided?

A good guide who knows their subject and loves talking to people is a fantastic way for visitors to follow a trail. But sometimes there is no guide. And many visitors prefer to explore by themselves, at their own pace.

A self-guided trail takes visitors to a selection of sites or 'stops' and helps explain an area without a personal guide. Heritage trails in our towns and villages are a very well-established form of self-guided trail.

However, a heritage trail that really works for the users, is enjoyable to follow, and keeps and rewards people's attention, is rare.



Smart phone app, Glaslough Village Heritage Trail, Co. Monaghan

TYPES OF SELF-GUIDED TRAIL

Self-guided trails are very variable.

They can use a wide range of media. Trails often use a combination of media, including:

- panels
- plaques
- leaflets
- audio posts
- handheld devices – such as mobile phones
- apps
- sculptures

Self-guided trails often combine a fixed element such as way-markers, panels or plaques, with a portable element such as a leaflet or audio device.

People can follow self-guided trails on foot, in a car, on a bike, in a canoe, on a horse (and probably in other ways).

Self-guided trails can be indoor or outdoor. They can cover a building, a site, a town or a landscape.

Self-guided trails can be serious and scholarly, or homely and humorous. They can involve quizzes and challenges, collecting stickers, solving riddles, action and adventure, rest and reflection.

They can be associated with specific interests and activities such as photography, brass-rubbing, visiting bars, climbing towers, eating cakes – or many other things.

PLAN TRAILS CAREFULLY

Think carefully about your audience, including people with disabilities, before you create a trail. Talk to a range of potential users about what they would like.

Trial your ideas before you invest heavily in infrastructure and interpretation.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

A good self-guided trail must offer clear directions as well as a story.

Following a trail is a journey. Trail-users need reassurance that it is a sensible and safe journey with reliable directions. If the directions are not clear, people are unlikely to attend to the story elements and may not follow the trail.

The trail design should differentiate the directional information from the storytelling content.

The directional information can be provided in words, as a map, on-the-ground markers or virtual geomarks. Using a combination is a good solution that takes account of people's learning styles. Many people are not confident map-readers so always supply at least one alternative navigation system.

Unless the route is very obvious, the map and written instructions need to be in a portable format.

People will not remember a map or written directions from an entrance panel.

Potential trail users need other practical information before they embark on the trail:

- how long the trail is
- how long they should allow to finish it (walking, cycling or driving)
- what sort of terrain, surfaces and gradients are involved (especially important for people with impaired mobility)
- whether there are short cuts back or alternative routes

Providing this essential, practical information limits the opportunities for telling the story. The storytelling on self-guided trails therefore has to be efficient and well-planned.



Promotion and approach, The Butler Trail, Co. Tipperary



Trail markers on audio trail, Mam Tor, UK



Directional signs, Bosworth, UK

Image top left © John D. Kelly Photography | Images top right © Peter Phillipson/TellTale | Image bottom © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

CHOOSING THE ROUTE

The route, and the way it is presented, should be carefully planned.

Fixed route ...

Some trails have a fixed route so people visit each stop in order. This works best where there is one entry point and one exit point e.g. a route through a building or a marked looped walk. Fixed routes can be important for managing visitor movement and preventing congestion.

Because a fixed route trail has a defined sequence, it can be used to tell a story with a beginning, middle and end.

... free choice

Wherever possible, visitors - especially Culturally Curious visitors - like to choose their route, picking out the elements they are most interested in. Many self-guided trails are designed so visitors can visit as few or as many stops as they like, in any order.

Free choice trails are common in gardens and other wander-at-will outdoor sites. Driving trails are almost always free choice trails.

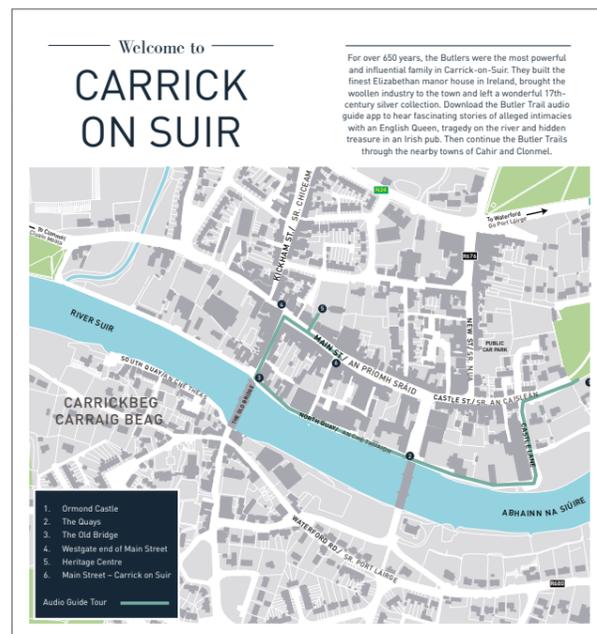
The stops on a free choice trail have to stand alone. The factors that link them into a wider story have to be repeated at each stop.

... or both?

Some self-guided trails combine both approaches by having essential and optional parts of the route.

Having a fixed start and finish to the trail creates structure and gives a beginning and ending to the story.

Trails should start and finish in a convenient place (e.g. a car park). Circular walks that return people to the start are a good idea.



The Butler Trail, Co. Tipperary

Image © OLI, Outside Looking In

Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale



Mount Field National Park, Tasmania, Australia

PLANNING THE CONTENT

The trails in Ireland's Ancient East should use storytelling at the individual sites and in the overall trail.

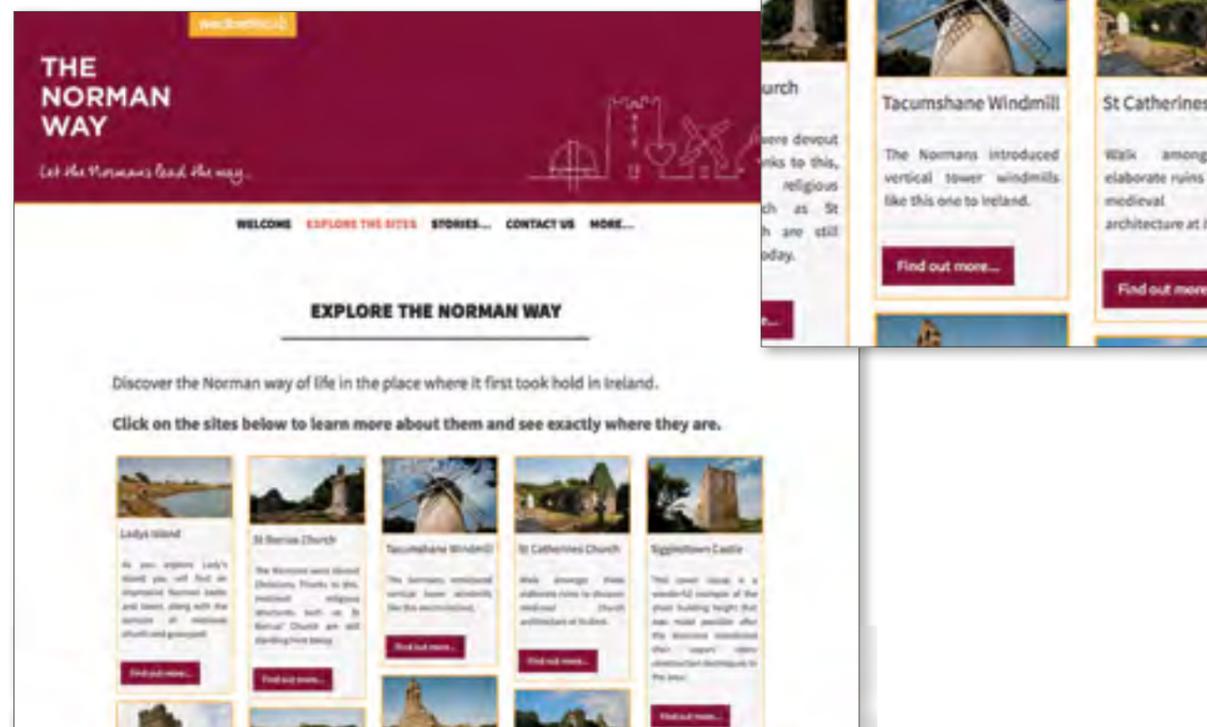
A good self-guided trail offers a 'big idea' about the place. It gives people a structure and purpose for their explorations. This can be general, e.g. 'Our town is full of surprising secrets' or very specific, e.g. 'Pirates were active all along this coast'.

The title of the trail should promise a story and an experience. It needs to tell potential users what the trail is about in a way that will intrigue or excite them.

All the stops on the trail should be relevant to the big idea and refer to it.

The introduction should appear wherever people first encounter the trail. This may be on an introductory panel, the home page of an app or the cover of a leaflet. In the case of a free choice trail that covers a large distance, like the Norman Way, the introduction to the trail should be repeated at each stop.

The Norman Way website



The Norman Way, Co. Wexford

TELLING THE STORY OF THE NORMAN WAY

Discover the Norman Way in Wexford ...
Step back in time and explore Wexford's ancient Norman landscape. Discover the treasures of the Norman way of life in the place where it first took hold in Ireland.

- constructed formidable buildings on this landscape;
- improved agriculture and food production here;
- supported a change in the character of the Christianity practised in the country;
- and enhanced military know-how and navigation in Ireland.

The Norman Way is a free choice, self-guided driving trail linking 20 lesser known, unstaffed sites in County Wexford. There is a carefully planned panel at every site.

All the panels have the same text on one side. This introduces the idea that the Normans brought a new way of life to Ireland:

How did the Normans change Ireland?
As generations of Normans made their home here, their Norman way of doing things enhanced everyday life in Ireland.

Travel along the Norman Way in Wexford to meet the descendants of those Normans and to discover how the Normans:

The other side of the panel tells the story of the individual site, emphasising its relevance to the 'Norman way of doing things'.

So, the first line of the Tacumshane windmill text reads:

The Normans introduced vertical tower windmills like this one to Ireland.

The Ballyhealy Tower House panel begins:

The Normans came up with an ingenious way to navigate the dangerous waters off South Wexford.



HOW TO ... CREATE A STORYTELLING SELF-GUIDED TRAIL

1. Identify who will use the trail, what they are interested in, how motivated they are likely to be, what their interests are, how far they are prepared to walk (or drive) and how much time they are prepared to spend. If you do not know, carry out some consumer research.

2. Identify how you will attract these people to follow your trail. What are the rewards of the trail? What makes it distinctive and memorable?

3. Identify the overall story of your trail. Write it in a couple of short sentences that identify a) the characters, b) the main action, c) the beginning and d) the ending.

4. Develop your story in relation to the stops on your trail. Begin with a long list of possible stops. For each evaluate: what story it tells, how powerful, interesting and entertaining that story is and how relevant to the overall story.

5. Explore the site/area looking for good experiences, attractive roads or paths, interesting places and good views. Consider people with limited mobility, with buggies or in wheelchairs. Identify hazards and obstacles, including gradients and path surfaces that may become slippery or wet.

6. Identify the stops that create the best storytelling opportunities because of strong stories linked to good experiences. Decide which stops are essential, and which are desirable. Delete any that do not fall into either category. Check whether any remaining stops duplicate or repeat material and consider further deletions.

7. Identify your route. Map the essential stops from Step 6 and draw the shortest reasonable route between them. Compare this with the motivations and time availability of your target audience (Step 1). If it is too long, delete some stops or offer routes of different lengths.

Interpretation points on the Battle of Bosworth trail



Images © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

The Butler Trail
A Tour of Tipperary's Medieval Towns

Distances

Kilkenny to Carrick-on-Suir	43km
Waterford to Carrick-on-Suir	27km
Carrick-on-Suir to Clonmel	21km
Clonmel to Cahir	18km
Cahir to Cashel	18km
Cashel to Fethard	17km
Cahir to Tipperary	21km
Clonmel to Fethard	14km
Cork to Cahir	76km
Dublin to Kilkenny	124km

Roads, Routes & Trails

- Butler Trail
- Links to Butler Trail
- Roads
- East Munster Way
- Tipperary Heritage Way
- Tow Path

Butler Sites

- Ormond Castle
- Kilcash Castle
- The Main Guard
- Cahir Castle
- Swiss Cottage
- Cahir House Hotel
- Athassel Abbey
- Kilkenny Castle
- Callan Friary
- Kells Priory
- Granagh Castle

Places of Interest

- Knockroe Tomb
- Ahenry High Crosses
- Kilkieran High Crosses
- Dove Hill Irish Design Centre
- Marfield Village Lake and Bird Sanctuary
- The Apple Farm
- Sensory and Mobility Garden
- Glengarra Woods
- Mitchelstown Caves
- Glen of Aherlow
- Rock of Cashel
- Fethard Medieval Walls

8. Decide on the number of stops. Aim for between 4 and 10 stops. If you feel you have too few stops add some 'desirable' stops from Step 6 to your map, choosing the ones that have the strongest stories and are closest to the core route. Consider the travel time between stops.

9. Check the route on the ground thoroughly. Follow the route that you have mapped in the way that visitors will use it. Identify where directional signage and/or instructions will be needed and mark accurately on a map. Check that you have all the necessary permissions for access and installation.

10. Develop the experience. Walk the trail making notes about what you would like the visitors to see or do. At each stop find something relevant to the story that visitors can do, look for or listen to. Identify images for each stop that will make the experience and the story more vivid.

11. Decide on the medium e.g. panels, leaflet, app, etc., see pages 40-53) for the trail.

12. Write an outline script of the overall stories and the stories for each site.

13. Write directional instructions for the trail.

14. Test the draft with volunteers from your target audience. This should include following the trail with a mock-up of the leaflet, audio guide or panels to test the directions, as well as inviting feedback on the story content. Make amendments as necessary.

15. Commission an illustrator to work on the illustrations and (if required) a map of the trail.

16. Use a skilled writer to develop the storytelling script for both the overall story and for each stop. This must be written to meet the constraints of the chosen medium.

17. Create a strong title and tag line that describes the overall story, emphasises the storytelling element and will appeal to your target audience.

18. Use a skilled designer to design the interpretation in a way that differentiates the directional and storytelling content so that both do their job well.

19. Produce final materials.

20. Promote and launch the trail.

21. Monitor use and collect feedback. Amend the trail and its promotion accordingly.



STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION IN COMMUNITIES

Our communities are full of great stories.

Telling them well to visitors can make places welcoming, distinctive and memorable.

Meeting a local person who is willing to take time to share some local stories can be a highlight of a holiday.

Visitors are likely to stay longer in towns and villages that tell their stories well.



Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

Training local communities as tour guides in Co. Kilkenny

COMMUNITY STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION CAN TAKE MANY FORMS

More than 1000 local people helped to create the Ros Tapestry.

Local festivals can include storytelling events.

Local people were models for dramatic photographic panels on the Holy Island of Lindisfarne.



Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

Ros Tapestry, Co. Wexford



Image © TellTale/Alex McNeill/CDA

Holy Island of Lindisfarne, UK

Workshops with the local community created the script for the 'Window on Wild Lindisfarne' Centre, Holy Island of Lindisfarne, UK



You will share our thoughts and maybe even recognise our faces as we bring our island to life for you. Wild Lindisfarne is many things, but above all it is our home.



Image left © Peter Phillipson/TellTale | Image right © TellTale/Alex McNeill/CDA

KCat Arts Centre, Callan, Co. Kilkenny

FINDING YOUR COMMUNITY STORIES

Community stories come from the community.

The best way to find them is to gather a group of people who know and love your place and get them talking. Make sure someone is taking notes.

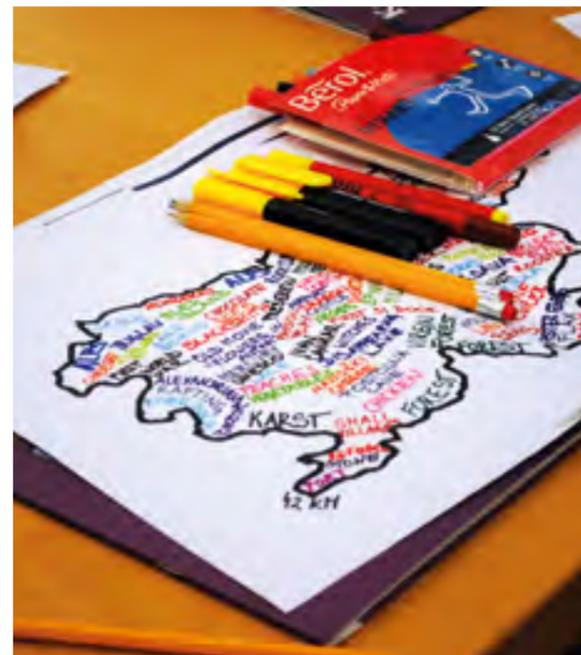
Keep this as informal and free-flowing as possible. Choose a venue where people will be comfortable. Supply tea and scones (or, if appropriate, something stronger).

You may need to direct the conversation. Use a map and ask people to highlight and talk about places of interest. Ask them about the characters of the town, past and present.

Make sure that you involve different types of people to get a range of perspectives. Going into different local organisations is a good way to do this.

Remember not all good stories are in the past or involve famous people.

Community mapping workshop, Kent, UK



Images © Janja Sivec/TellTale



Hearing ex-lighthouse keepers tell their stories makes a visit to Hook Lighthouse vivid and memorable. Co. Wexford

Image © Hook Heritage

DEVELOPING YOUR COMMUNITY STORIES

Practise telling your stories in different ways so that you know the characters and the main points really well.

Choose your storytelling interpretation project. Are you going to create guided tours, a self-guided trail, leaflets, panels, plaques, audio – or something more creative like a performance or an artwork? Think about the skills your group has and what you will enjoy working on as well as what visitors will like.

Test a draft version of your ideas with people who do not know your town and get feedback.

Remember community projects need to be enjoyable so pay attention to the social aspects.

Don't rush people. Be realistic about time, especially if you are volunteers. This will take time and commitment.

A group that encourages and supports each other will be more successful. Celebrate successes regularly.



Image © Dynamic Studio

Children from the small local school worked with a professional photographer to produce ideas and images for these panels at Calke Abbey, a National Trust property, UK (see also image on page 17)



Image © Alex McNeill/CDA

HOW TO ...

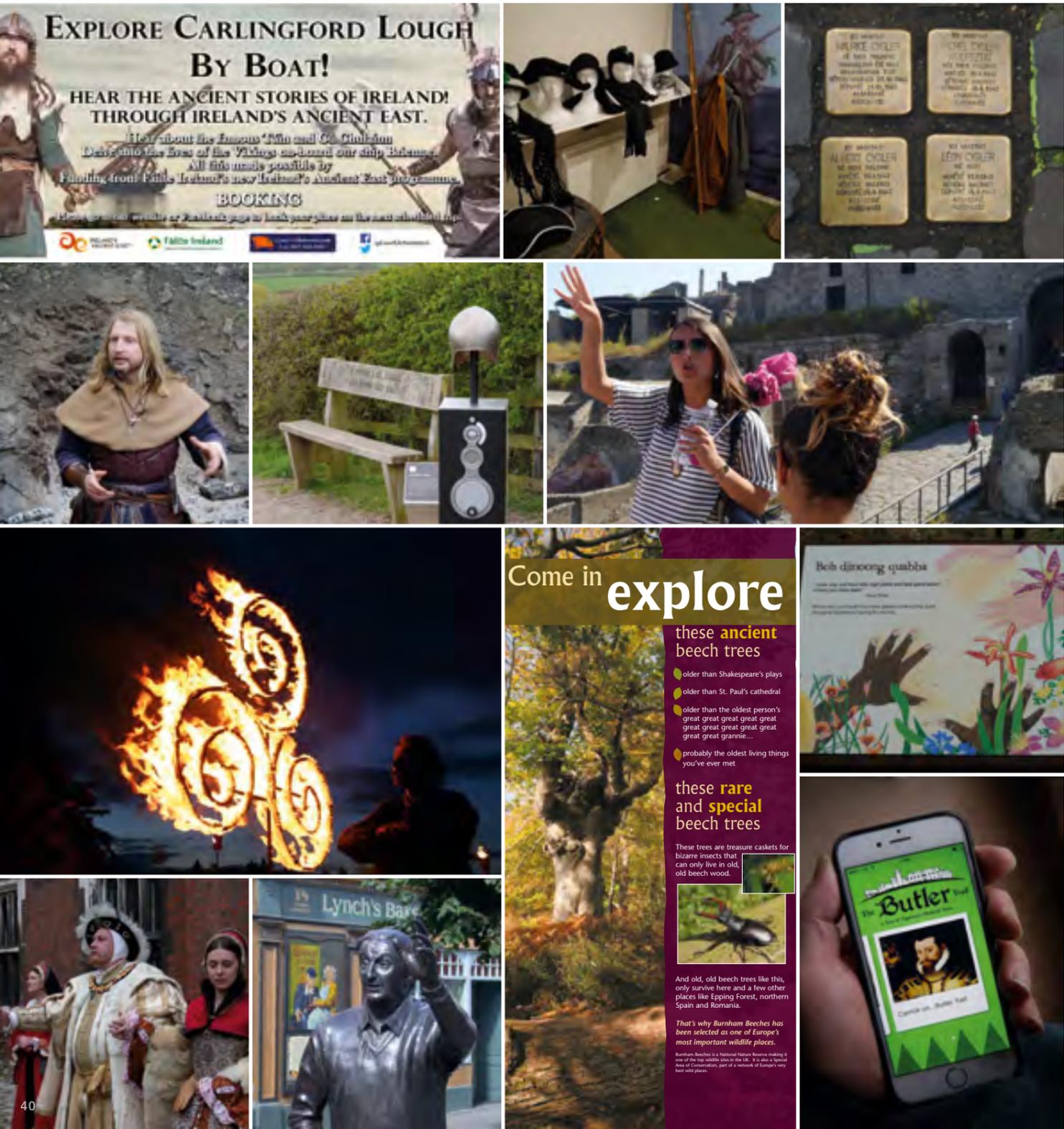
CREATE A COMMUNITY STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION PROJECT

1. Appoint a co-ordinator who can drive the project and support the group.
2. Make sure you have an enthusiastic group and be clear from the outset what everyone wants to achieve.
3. Be as open as possible about what you are doing and find ways to involve people who are interested. Make links with other groups in your community, such as local festivals and twinning groups.
4. Research the stories carefully. Choose the ones you will tell. Remember that you do not need to tell visitors everything – just the best bits.
5. Be creative with the stories. As a community explore them in art, drama, creative writing and any other ways that are available to you.
6. Enjoy yourselves. Take the work seriously – but not too seriously. Your visitors will enjoy your interpretation more if you enjoyed making it.
7. Fit people to the roles – some people will like research, others performance, others may have photography, design or business skills.
8. Look at similar projects and learn from other people's experiences while you are planning what you will do.
9. Be prepared to make mistakes and learn. Trial your activity with people from outside your town and listen to what they tell you. Their perspective of what is interesting may be very different from yours.
10. Be prepared to ask for help if you need it.
11. Be prepared for criticism. You can be sure someone in the town will hate what you do. Listen to the people who like it too.
12. Celebrate your successes – and your failures.



MEDIA FOR STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

You can use many media for storytelling interpretation.



PERSONAL INTERPRETATION

People telling stories are the core of Ireland's Ancient East.

Storytelling developed as a face-to-face performance medium. A person is still the most accessible, engaging and enjoyable way to share a story.

GUIDES AND GUIDED TOURS

A guide who knows and loves your business, and the visitors or customers, is likely to be a great storytelling interpreter.

Face-to-face communication is great for storytelling interpretation because:

- The guide structures the visits so that the story is delivered in sequence and with a range of storytelling techniques, e.g. changes of pace, tone, use of suspense and repetition.
- A person can be flexible and responsive and adapt the story, often on the spot, for different visitors.
- It can be interactive and involve visitors in dialogue.
- It is relatively easy to get feedback from visitors and to change the tour in the light of their comments.

But ...

- A tour can feel constraining for visitors who prefer to explore in their own way and at their own pace.
- It is difficult to offer tours in different languages.
- Tours only work well for a limited number of people.
- Maintaining consistency and quality can be difficult.



The Kennedy Homestead, Dunganstown, New Ross, Co. Wexford



Youghal Clock Gate Tower, Co. Cork

All images © Peter Phillipson/TellTale except for top left © Uisneach Management Ltd.

Image © Youghal Socio-Economic Development Group Ltd.



USING NON-PERSONAL MEDIA

Telling stories well without a person to tell the story is challenging.

Each medium presents different opportunities and challenges for storytelling interpretation.

The best experiences usually involve a mix of media.

Producing non-personal storytelling interpretation is a creative and skilful process.

It needs:

- information about users and informed predictions about what they will like
- to be organised, brief and powerful to make the best use of visitors' limited time and attention
- to use the key ingredients of story, characters, action and atmosphere effectively
- a lively style that entertains as well as informs



Powerscourt Gardens, Co. Wicklow



Powerscourt Gardens, Co. Wicklow

HOW TO ...

CREATE STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION FOR MULTI-LINGUAL AUDIENCES

Powerscourt Gardens, Co. Wicklow

Image © Powerscourt Estate

1. Written and spoken interpretation in Ireland's Ancient East should ideally be provided in languages other than English and Irish.

2. Provide translations of the main points of your story in the most common languages, particularly French and German.

3. Where possible use native speakers to provide the translations.

4. It is not possible to provide translations in the native languages of all visitors. Therefore, aim to make the interpretation understandable by people who have English as a second or third language.

5. Pictures are a universal language: tell the story visually as well as in words.

6. Use familiar English words in simply constructed sentences. (This is good practice for all interpretation.)

7. Provide written as well as spoken English in audio-visual presentations: many people find reading easier than listening.

8. Pay particular attention to the use of language at the beginning and end of your experience.



Powerscourt Gardens, Co. Wicklow

Image © Peter Phillipson/Tei/Tale



Smithwick's Experience, Kilkenny

AUDIO-VISUAL

Good for storytelling interpretation because:

- Audio-visual can be dramatic and powerfully evocative.
- It is strongly structured, with a clear sequence and therefore good for storytelling.
- It tends to keep attention (if it is not too long!).
- It is a good medium for conveying complex information.
- Visitors can use headsets with different audio tracks, e.g. foreign languages, or audio description for visually impaired people.
- People tend to perceive it as easier than reading or listening.
- It is often popular.

But ...

- Audio-visual is expensive to produce and to install.
- It is expensive and difficult to update.
- It requires an appropriate space at the right place in the visit.
- It can result in 'bunching' visitors.



Surround audio-visual, Athlone Castle



Powerscourt Gardens, Co. Wicklow



Powerscourt Gardens, Co. Wicklow



Surround audio-visual, Stonehenge, UK

Image left © Peter Phillipson/TellTale | Image top right © Powerscourt Estate | Image bottom right © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

Image © Powerscourt Estate

Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale



Bosworth Battlefield, UK

Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

PANELS

Good for storytelling interpretation because:

- Panels can show images as well as words. In particular they can show people things they cannot see (for instance, what this ruin looked like 600 years ago, or what is below the ground).
- They are closely associated with the place.
- They are always available, which is often important at an unstaffed site.
- They are relatively cheap to produce.

But ...

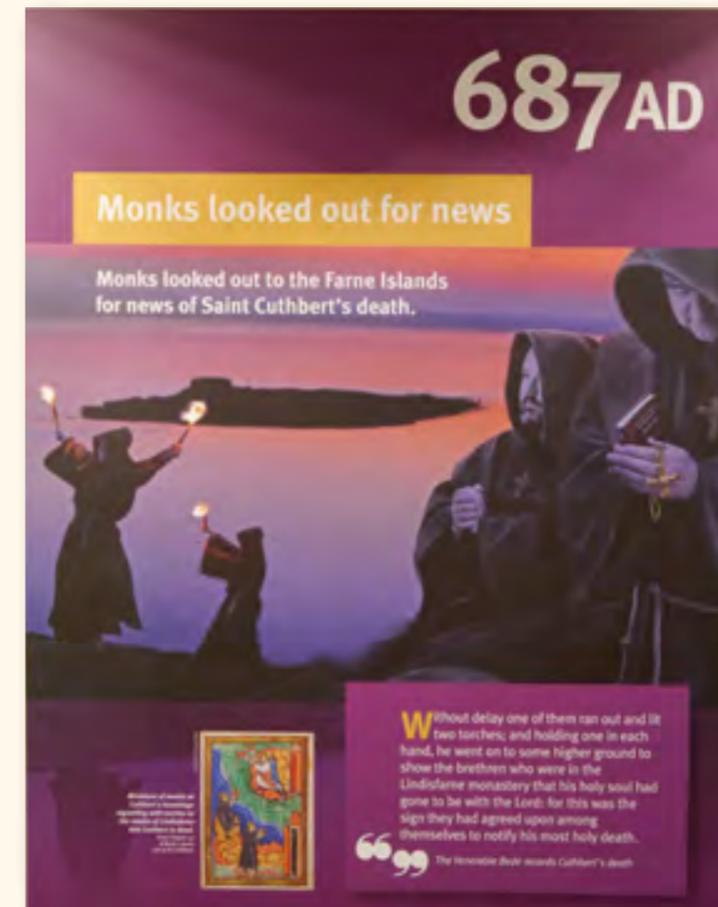
- Panels are very limited in how much information they can carry so can only be used to tell simple stories.
- They are often dull (although they do not need to be).
- It is hard to include more than one or two languages.
- They are difficult and expensive to change.
- Panels are usually only read by more motivated visitors who like reading.
- Badly designed or positioned panels can be visually intrusive and clutter a site.

Panels are hard to do well and there are many poor examples.

HOW TO ...

CREATE A STORYTELLING PANEL

1. Plan your panel carefully, using the *How to plan your storytelling interpretation* advice on pages 54 and 55.
2. Don't be overambitious; don't give your panel too many jobs to do.
3. Be absolutely clear about what the main message of your panel is. Keep it as simple as possible. This will help you put the most important elements in the places where people will see it first.
4. Think about how much of your story you can show in a picture. People will often 'read' the picture before the words, so plan them together.
5. Aim for a maximum of 200 words on a panel. On a bilingual panel you can stretch this to 125 words in each language. Writing a story within those constraints is skilled work.



A bespoke image, bold design and a strong text structure that includes a contemporary quotation combine in a dramatic panel in the Lookout Tower on the Island of Lindisfarne, UK (see also panel on page 35)

Image © TellTale/Alex McNeill/CDA



At isolated, unstaffed sites, like Five Knolls near Luton, UK, a panel may be the only way to tell the story and so may have more words. This panel compensates by using atmospheric images and a strong text structure that makes the text easy to scan.

- 6. The text must be clearly ordered and designed so that it can be scanned. People will see the title and image first so spend time making sure these are eye-catching.
- 7. A short (30 words max) introductory paragraph should give the main point of the panel and catch the readers’ interest. It should be more prominent than the other text.
- 8. Break up blocks of text, using white space, subheadings and bullets. Aim for a maximum of six lines in a paragraph. (Most of this Toolkit is written in that style.)
- 9. Be creative. Panels don’t have to be large, rectangular or made of GRP (glass-reinforced plastic). They can be little, funny and/or temporary and can have tactile elements, objects or sound associated with them.

- 10. Work with a good graphic designer, illustrator and scriptwriter.
- 11. The stand is as important as the panel. Stands can be used creatively to communicate a sense of place.
- 12. Think carefully about where your panel will be. Make sure it is where people will see it but not where it will dominate a view. Make sure people, including wheelchair users, can access it.
- 13. Maintain the panel well. The condition of the panel communicates a clear implicit message about how you value and care for the site.



Panels are challenging for storytelling interpretation.

Panels are not good for long narratives. You will need to be skilful with your words. Some things that can help to keep the word count down:

- use images to tell the story
- use a strong structure including a clear text hierarchy
- tell snippets and short stories not great sagas
- break your story into 'chapters' and use a number of panels
- tell the start of the story really well
- finish with a cliff-hanger and tell people where they can find out more

MORE MEDIA FOR STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION



Low-tech interactives at St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny

EXHIBITIONS

Good for storytelling interpretation because:

- Exhibitions are often well-structured experiences with a clear beginning, middle and ending.
- They can include a wide range of media that holds attention and adds variety.
- They can be atmospheric and evocative.
- They can portray characters and drama well.
- They can be hierarchically organised so they are appropriate for visitors with different levels of interest.

But ...

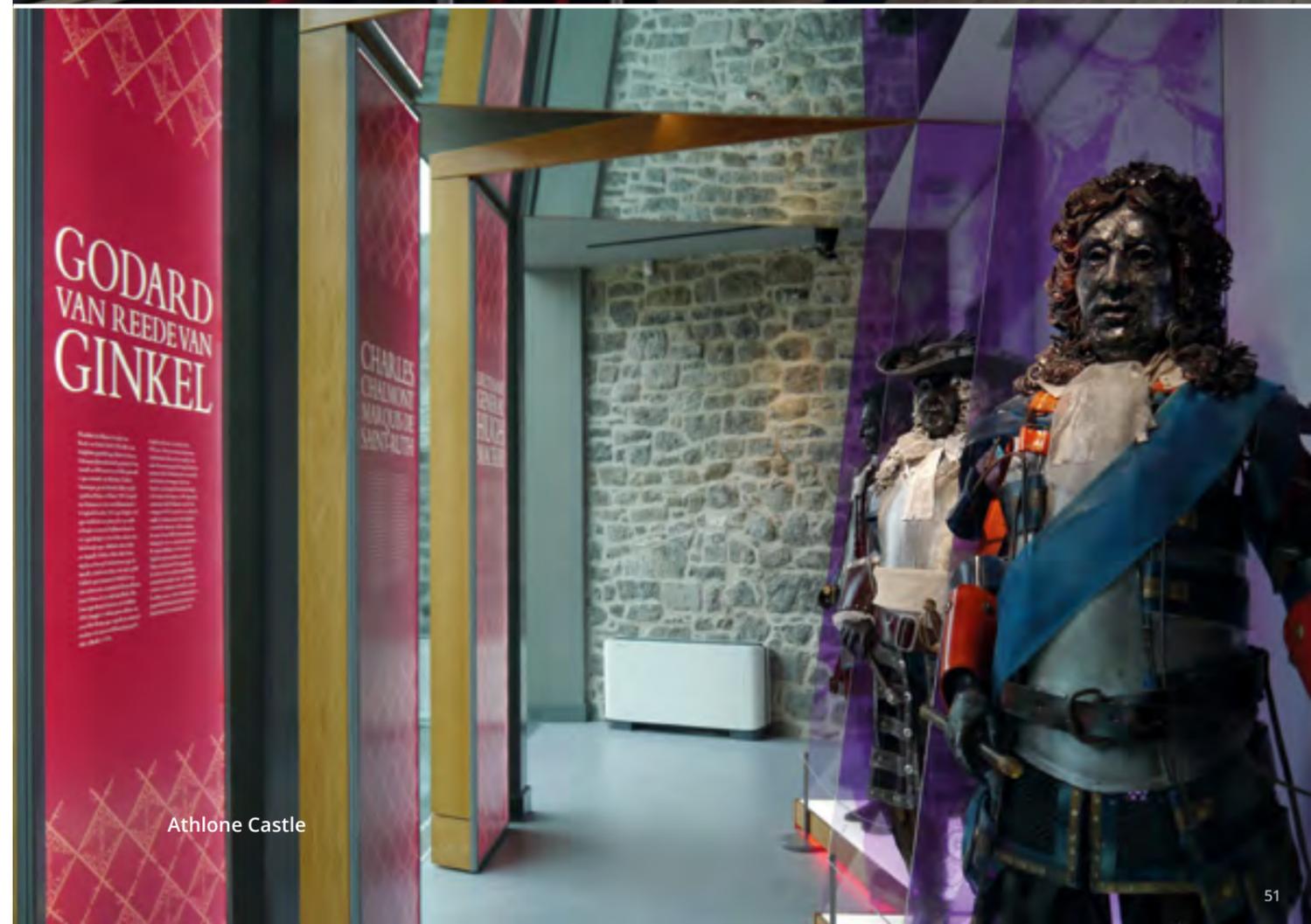
- Exhibitions need skilled design, often involving a team of specialists.
- They are often expensive and require considerable time and energy to produce.
- They are usually hard to change.

Images © Peter Phillipson/TeITale

Image top © Titanic Experience Cobh Ltd | Image bottom © Peter Phillipson/TeITale



The Titanic Experience, Cobh, Co. Cork



Athlone Castle

APPS (INCLUDING AUDIO TRAILS)

Downloading material to mobile phones is good for storytelling interpretation because:

- Audio trails can use different voices and sound effects to add variety and create atmosphere.
- They can portray characters and drama well.
- Mobile phones can be good for audio and simple visual material.
- The interpretation can be relatively easily provided in different languages.

- The storytelling can be closely linked to the on-site experience e.g. triggered by GPS.
- Apps can be used when the visitor chooses, including pre- and post-visit.
- Apps can be interactive and include games, quizzes and challenges.
- They are visually unobtrusive on the ground.

But ...

- Apps and audio trails for mobile phones need to be well-promoted otherwise visitors may not notice them.
- Apps can be heavy on data transfer and so can be expensive for overseas visitors. Wherever possible provide free wi-fi.
- Translations of different voices can be difficult and expensive to obtain.
- Mobile phones are not good for reading written texts, especially long ones.
- They are not always popular with visitors.
- Not all visitors own a smart phone – or want to use them in this way on a day out.

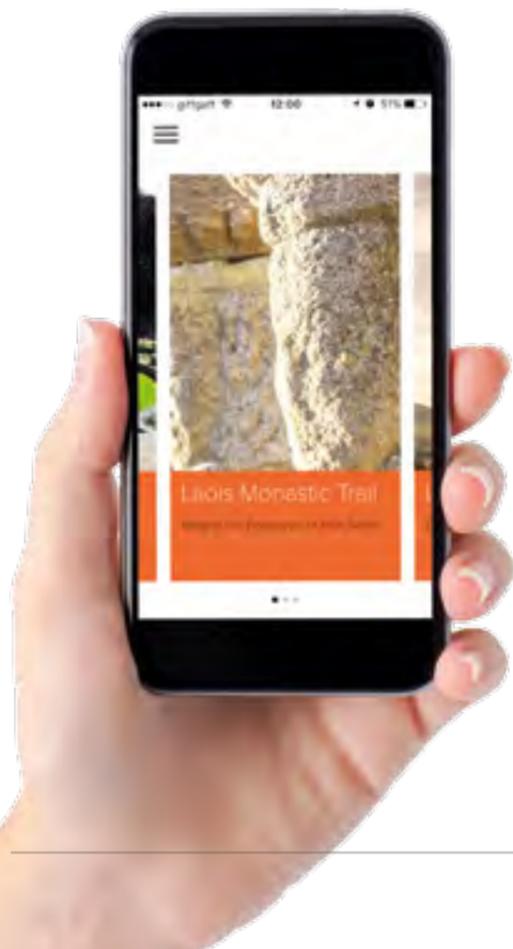


Image © Peter Phillipson/TellTale

LEAFLETS

Good for storytelling interpretation because:

- Leaflets can be attractive and attention-grabbing.
- They can contain words and images, including maps.
- They have a clear structure with a beginning, middle and ending and so are good for storytelling.
- They can be read before, during or after a visit.
- They can be available in different languages.
- They are easily portable.
- They can link well to site features and encourage exploration.
- They are relatively easy to update.
- They can give people useful information to take away, like contact details, events programme, special offers etc.

But ...

- Leaflets should not be crammed with text: they are limited in how much information they can contain.
- They need skilled design and high-quality illustration to be effective.
- Storing large numbers of leaflets can be a problem for small businesses.
- It is hard to include more than one or two languages on a single leaflet.

HOW TO . . .

PLAN YOUR STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION

This simplified planning process will help you develop a preliminary **Interpretation Strategy** for your tourism project.

For more detailed advice refer to the Fáilte Ireland manual and exercises [Sharing our Stories: Using interpretation to improve the visitors' experience at heritage sites.](#)

1. PEOPLE



1a. Who is this for and what do they want? Write down up to three important visitor types for your business.

1b. Identify three things that each group of visitors will want from the storytelling experience.

- Families will want activities they can do together, child-friendly language and active engagement.
- Coach tours may have a time limit and need room to accommodate up to 60 people at a time.
- Overseas visitors may need explanations of history that all Irish people would know. They may also require information in their own language (see page 43).

2. YOUR STORY



2a. What do you want your visitors or customers to remember about you at the end of their holiday?

2b. What stories can you tell that will help towards that?

2c. What resources do you have (research, archives, objects, photographs, local memories) to help you tell the story?

2d. Look back at *How to plan and deliver storytelling interpretation* on page 19 and write notes on how to tell your story as powerfully as possible.

3. THE EXPERIENCE



3a. What experiences can you offer that will relate to your story?

3b. Look back at *How to make your storytelling interpretation into an experience to remember* on pages 22-23 and write notes on how make your story into a great visitor experience. Focus on the visitor's enjoyment and be imaginative.

3c. Walk around your site and choose locations for your storytelling experiences.

4. STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION MEDIA



4a. Choose your media. Read the pros and cons of the different media on pages 40-46 and 50-53.

4b. Check that you can meet the maintenance and running costs (financial and human) of your chosen medium.

Keep your eye on your Interpretation Strategy decisions during development and production.

Make sure you:

- include your decisions, and the reasons behind them, in the briefs to designers and manufacturers
- refer back to your Interpretation Strategy regularly to check you are on track



**STORYTELLING INTERPRETATION
BRINGS THE IRELAND'S ANCIENT
EAST EXPERIENCE ALIVE**

If you have any questions, please do get in touch
with the Ireland's Ancient East Team.
email us at info@irelandsancienteast.ie