



Using consultants



How to appoint



Going live



Letting go!

the journal for Scotland's Interpreters

Interpret Scotland

issue 9 | spring 2004

A' Foillseachadh na h-Alba



Working with consultants and designers

Interpret Scotland

www.interpretscotland.org.uk

ISSN (print) 1740-1283

Produced by Interpret Scotland

Issue 9: Working with consultants and designers; Spring 2004

Interpret Scotland is an inter-agency initiative that seeks to:

- ◆ Improve the quality and quantity of interpretation in Scotland
- ◆ Promote the co-ordination of interpretation at local and strategic level
- ◆ Share resources, expertise and experience to avoid duplicating effort



Consultant *noun.*

A person who gives professional advice or services in a specialist field.

Client *noun.* A person using the services of a professional.

Imperial War Museum North -
© Imperial War Museum North

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Design and layout: Design and Interpretative Services, Forestry Commission Scotland 0131 334 0303. Printed by Lithoprint on environmentally friendly paper

The views in this journal represent those of authors and contributors, not necessarily those of the sponsoring organisations. Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of its contents, we accept no responsibility for inaccurate or misleading information.

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Can't live with them, can't live without them.....

'I could have done that myself...if I only had the time!' Familiar? But usually you couldn't have...and you didn't have the time! You hire consultants to create things that you can't, to bring an 'edge' which you can't deliver competently yourself. Yet the scenario that ends in tears is all too familiar, usually because someone forgot it is a two-way street; *communicating and listening* are key to successful projects.

In this edition we look at the how clients can get the best from their consultants and designers. To start, Genevieve Adkins and Aaron Lawton examine the client:consultant relationship from both sides, coming to much the same conclusion about what makes a successful relationship. John Veverka provides advice on how to select a consultant or designer, whilst other authors look at the particular issues surrounding delivery, live interpretation and working with artists.

Several common themes have emerged, including the need for a good brief as the basis of any successful project (see page 8 for guidance). Other key themes are:

- ◆ Be honest - if you want them to think for you, tell them so.
- ◆ Communication - prepare a proper brief and talk, regularly!
- ◆ Trust - let them do what they are being paid for.
- ◆ Creativity - grow the industry, it's in your interests. Un-paid pitching only dilutes, inviting the safe and the mundane. You pay for creativity.
- ◆ Take a chance...let creativity and innovation flourish. We don't need more of the same - we need better.
- ◆ Perspective - keep it! It is really a ménage-a-trois you are entering as there is always a third party in the relationship - the 'consumer'.

Good consultants are nurtured by good clients - and the more good consultants there are out there, the more fun you will have.

Bob Jones, Head of Design and Interpretative Services, Forestry Commission Scotland

Interpret Scotland is published twice a year and is distributed free on request. If you would like to join the mailing list, or if you are receiving duplicate copies, please contact Sandra Phipps at Scottish Natural Heritage on 01738 444177. You could also visit the Interpret Scotland web site: www.interpretscotland.co.uk

Next edition

The next edition will celebrate the 10th edition of Interpret Scotland and take a look at where interpretation is heading in Scotland. Please contact the Editor with any letters, news items and articles. Copy deadline is 1 July 2004.

"The difference between a great design and a lousy one is in the meshing of the thousand details that either fit or don't, and the spirit of the passionate intellect that has tied them together."

Ted Nelson, software designer

working with a designer



Working with a designer is like a relationship. And like any relationship, it's all about finding a partner who can share your beliefs and interests. It's also about setting boundaries, listening and communicating, managing the relationship, and, most importantly, having fun.

So, when so many relationships fail, how can clients work with and get the best from their designers?

Finding a partner

Finding a partner takes time and effort. Start by creating a long list of possible designers for your project. *Museum Suppliers Yearbook*, *Museums Journal*, *New Heritage* and *Museum Practice* provide a good starting point and can be supplemented by talking to colleagues and professional organisations¹. To refine your list, visit examples of designers' work. Try not to rely on reviews – these are not always impartial and may not provide the answers you seek. Finally, take up references.

When tendering, select designers whose portfolio demonstrates an affinity with your project and whose service areas, working methods and general design approach suit your needs.

Setting the boundaries

Setting out the nature of the client:designer relationship is just as important as defining the aims and objectives for the project. All too often clients fail to establish boundaries with designers, leading to lack of clarity about responsibilities, programme slippage and budget overspend.

To avoid such problems, identify and agree which partner is responsible for which elements of the project and, having agreed these responsibilities, *stick to them*. Any subsequent changes should be agreed by both parties.

This is critical when working with interpretive designers where responsibility for research, interpretive planning and content creation should be clearly spelt out. Small organisations without resources to carry out these tasks will benefit from additional support. However, larger clients, including those with in-house interpretive teams, may prefer to undertake these works themselves.

Communicating

Listening and questioning are two of the most powerful tools available to the client in getting the best from their designer.

By listening and questioning the client can assess how well the designer is developing their understanding of the project and is assimilating this knowledge into a design solution. At the same

time, the designer has the opportunity to articulate and explain their design.

It is vital that the client fully understands and is able to sign off designs without reservation, allowing the designer to deliver the scheme through specialist suppliers. If you have any doubts – raise them! Don't harbour concerns which can be easily addressed or may expose real weakness in approach or specification.

Throughout the design process it is vital that both partners are afforded opportunities to listen, question and learn. By creating a forum for open and honest communication between client and designer, the chances of achieving a successful project through a sense of shared responsibility are maximised.

Managing the relationship

The key tool in managing the client:designer relationship is the project programme. This should be jointly created at the beginning of the project with contributions from both partners. By creating the programme in this way it is possible to build a sense of shared responsibility for the project. The programme should identify individual tasks within the project; the partner responsible for each task; the order in which tasks should be carried out; and deadlines for each task within a broader project programme.

Thereafter it is the role of the Project Manager to ensure each partner is made aware of their responsibilities and deadlines and to incorporate any additional tasks into the programme, ensuring that both partners are informed of such changes.

Whilst this may seem overly formal, it enables the client organisation to manage both the designer and itself! Bear in mind that the client team may be complex, drawing on input from several departments. It can sometimes be harder to manage an internal client team than the client:designer relationship.

Having fun

Finally, working with designers and getting the best from them is about having fun. Taking a project from an initial idea to opening can be hard work, with difficult decisions to be made along the way. It is important that these difficulties do not override the inherent **fun** of the creative process.

Working with a designer is like any relationship; not always easy or comfortable, but ultimately worth every effort to make it a success.

Genevieve Adkins, Head of Interpretation, Historic Scotland.

¹See page 8 for further guidance on where to find prospective consultants and designers.

"To fulfil a dream, to be allowed to sweat over lonely labour, to be given the chance to create, is the meat and potatoes of life. The money is the gravy."
Bette Davis, actress (1908 - 1989)

using consultants



It has been said that consultants are people who borrow your watch to tell you the time. Some might even keep the watch and suggest a retainer for further time checks, before selling it back to you just as the battery runs out.

Like all good tales, this one has a grain of truth. For example, interpretive planners certainly gather information from the people who know the subject best. However, a good consultant will combine this with their own knowledge, experience and skills to reveal opportunities, overcome constraints and chart a path to project success.

Every situation is unique and consultants shouldn't be expected to parachute in with ready-made answers. They are more useful as part of a project team, acting as catalyst, provocateur, idea factory, arbitrator and voice of reason. This may entail them asking some difficult questions in order to raise everybody's understanding of the real issues.

At its best, working with consultants is an economical way of accessing experienced labour, specialist skills, alternative approaches and new ideas. At its worst, it can be an ineffective, unproductive and costly waste of time. What makes the difference?

Briefs and budgets

Understanding why a project is being carried out and what outcomes are required is obviously vital. A clear and comprehensive brief provides the basic foundation for a successful plan. Briefs should clearly describe the project goals, including its background, scope, aims and objectives, outputs, timescales and budget¹.

Project resourcing is also a major issue. The funds and timescales available must reflect the scale of issues to be resolved and the quality of thinking required. Although some consultants will take on under-resourced projects, this carries a high risk for the client of paying for something that is worth nothing. The consultant also risks being associated with sub-standard work.

Selection process

Choosing the right consultant is the make or break point for any project. This creates the conditions for the work to be enjoyable and highly successful or for it to devour time and resources for little benefit. Selecting committed, creative, quality driven, client-focused consultants will help produce a 'can-do' atmosphere in which anything is possible.

Reliance on rigid competitive tendering that favours the lowest price bid is a major cause of project failure. If compelled to use this

method, changing the emphasis from price to ability, reliability, compatibility, quality and value for money can be achieved simply by stating the available budget in the brief. If freed from the artificial constraints of competitive tendering, it is often better to simply identify the best consultant for the job and thrash out an agreement with them within the available budget.

Unless as part of a well-resourced competition, consultants shouldn't be asked to suggest solutions or develop designs at the selection stage. This regrettable practice produces poor results by fixing the project outcomes before any in-depth consideration of the full project parameters and possibilities can take place. Requiring this free work also puts smaller practices under huge strain and is against the professional code of conduct for many consultants.

Despite the selection process being critical to the project's success, consultants still receive tender requests that:

- ◆ Arrive unannounced, without a call to check suitability, availability or interest.
- ◆ Lack clearly stated aims or outcomes on which to assess the work required.
- ◆ Have no indication of the available budget.
- ◆ Are sent to eight or more consultants, making tendering uneconomical and increasing fee levels across the industry to pay for unnecessary work.
- ◆ Require unpaid design proposals before proper research, consultation and planning of objectives, themes, storylines or media.
- ◆ Are part of a spurious tender process where the preferred contractor has already (often correctly) been identified.

Project management

Having commissioned the right consultant, the challenge is to create a structured yet flexible and supportive project environment where everybody's interests are aligned. Successful projects are often those where a strong partnership approach is forged between consultant and client for the duration of the project and beyond. The consultant becomes an integral part of the client's team of project stakeholders who are jointly responsible for ensuring the success of the endeavour.

This partnership and team orientated approach can involve the client group in additional work, but usually produces a better result, in addition to transferring knowledge and skills from consultant to the client organisation. A true win:win scenario.

Aaron Lawton, interpretation, visitor experience and tourism consultant.

¹See p8 for further guidance on interpretive design briefs.

"What every consultant needs to know:
1) In case of doubt, make it sound convincing.
2) Do not believe in miracles. Rely on them."

Murphy's Law (Finagle's Rules)

making the choice

John Veverka suggests what clients should consider when appointing an interpretive consultant, and what consultants should consider when accepting a contract.

For the client

- 1 Give your prospective consultants enough time to respond to your brief, and be clear about what type of tender proposal you want. Asking for unpaid design work puts a real burden on consultants and paying for submissions will result in better tenders.
- 2 Ask whether the consultants have specific expertise in interpretation. Interpretive design is a specialist skill that commercial design practices usually lack.
- 3 Ask to see samples of their products – photos of exhibits, trail guides, panels or interpretive plans. Do they provoke, relate, and reveal? Are they outcome or objective based?
- 4 Ask for references – and call them. Find out how well they met their brief and how well they handled the client relationship.
- 5 Ask for information on their training and professional accreditation. Anyone can call themselves an interpretive consultant, but do their academic and professional credentials back them up? Membership of the Association of Heritage Interpretation is a good guide.
- 6 Ask for information about their project management and reporting processes. Find out who will be their project manager and whether their reporting and approval systems will give you sufficient input to the project.
- 7 Projects will probably cost more, and take longer, than you think. How will the costs be estimated by the consultant? How will you know what is a fair fee to be charged and how will any cost overruns be dealt with?
- 8 Ask how they might have their products evaluated. You don't want to buy something that looks nice but doesn't work. But be prepared to pay for the evaluation work.
- 9 Is the consultant able to handle the size of your project? A large project may get more focused attention from a smaller firm, but smaller companies may be less flexible in dealing with any unforeseen problems.
- 10 Selecting a consultant should be based on a 'value for money' assessment of their skills and demonstrated experience – not on the 'lowest bid'.



The pitch

- 11 For projects above £10-15K, try to interview a short list of prospective consultants. Interviews for smaller scale projects are not necessary or realistic, and here you should be able to choose by considering portfolios and by asking past clients.
- 12 Finally, do you like them? What does your gut feeling tell you? Selecting a consultant is like appointing a colleague – you have to be able to work together.

For the consultant

- 1 How clear is the brief and does the client actually know what they want?
- 2 Does the client have a realistic idea as to what things cost and how long projects take?
- 3 Do they have a project manager to make sure that there are no communication gaps between them and you?
- 4 What will the client supply as part of the project – draft text, images, research, visitor use data, maps or in-house experts?
- 5 Do they have a project time-line or task list already in mind? When does the project have to be completed and is that a reasonable time to do it?
- 6 Who will review and approve draft materials and how active will they be in the project?
- 7 Does the client have a project steering group and if so, what involvement will they have in reviewing and approving draft materials? Will you get caught up in a 'design-by-committee' project or be given contradictory instructions by the client and their steering group (it does happen!)
- 8 Does the client have funding 'in hand', and what will their payment schedule be in paying invoices?
- 9 How receptive will they be to new ideas as opposed to thinking about the ways things have 'always been done'?
- 10 Do you think that the project will be fun to do or do you see potential 'problems' ahead with it? Any problem politics involved?
- 11 Finally, do you feel that you and the prospective client will make a good team and be able to successfully work together?



Design by committee

Cartoons by George Mitchell/Objectives



Do you like them?

John Veverka, Certified Interpretive Planner.

"A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on."
Samuel Goldwyn (1882 - 1974), *Goldwyn's Law of Contracts*

Delivery

Once the brief is confirmed, the interpretive designers have been appointed and the contract is in place, the project can begin. What happens next?

Let's take as an example a hypothetical interpretive trail. The brief is to produce a map-based panel at the start of the trail and two further panels en route.

The starting point is to clarify with the client any remaining design, content and technical issues. These may have been resolved in the brief or the designer's proposals, but as often as not they only receive the focussed attention needed when the contract begins.

In this hypothetical case, outstanding issues might include confirming the exact location of the panels, which will affect the orientation and perspective of the map and other illustrations. The panels' location and orientation may also have technical implications in terms of ground conditions, being vulnerable to vandalism, excessive UV bleaching (i.e. if they are to be are south facing) or to corroding tree sap from overhanging branches. Planning consent may be required (who will sort this?).

The map format may also need to be clarified. Will it be a vertical plan or an oblique '3D' view? The latter are more attractive and easier to understand, but are more complex and expensive to create. Visual references such as aerial photos and site plans will be needed (who will source these?) and will Ordnance Survey copyright permission be required?

Once outstanding issues such as these are resolved, the designers should then be allowed to do what they are trained to do: design. The role of the client should now be one of review and approval. Design by committee is never successful and always dilutes creativity.

Design and production

The design and production stages for these hypothetical panels would typically be as follows:

- 1 The interpretive content is researched and possible images are identified for each panel. This is usually undertaken by the interpretive writer, a specialist member of the client or design team.
- 2 Technical specifications are agreed for the panels' material, frames and mounting.
- 3 Draft text is written and passed to the client. At this stage the client should comment on and agree the style, content, interpretive approach and accuracy. Some of the text will be explicitly 'interpretive', whilst some will be geared towards visitor information and orientation. The map will need annotations or a key.



- 4 Specific illustrations and/or photographs are identified and agreed. As availability of site specific, good weather photos is often a problem, forward planning can avoid frustrating delays or the need to use inferior images. Those needed to specifically compliment the text are highlighted at the draft text stage and discussed with the client. If photo library images have to be used the costs can now be identified. Illustration briefs are agreed and colour palettes and illustration styles (e.g. watercolour, line, woodcut, computer generated) may also be confirmed. The need to include any logos on the panels is confirmed and responsibility for their sourcing agreed.
- 5 Design concepts are created and issued to the client for comment, showing the proposed design style and content. Following this a further concept visual may be required if substantial changes are made.
- 6 Pencil roughs of the map and other illustrations are produced and passed to the client for comment. These ensure technical accuracy before the final coloured illustrations are produced.
- 7 Finished illustrations and the final text are passed to the client for signing-off.
- 8 First artwork proofs are produced and passed to the client for approval. Staged payments may be part of the contract, and this can be a good point to trigger an invoice.
- 9 Comments on the first artwork proofs are received from the client and any changes are made to the design and text.
- 10 Finished artwork is passed to the client for signing-off. Any further client changes at this stage, beyond very minor amends, would usually be charged extra.
- 11 The approved artwork is sent to the panel manufacturers for printing and production. The production proofs - used to check colour balance - are countersigned by the client if necessary.
- 12 Printing and manufacturing is completed and the finished panels are delivered to the client, who installs them on site.
- 13 The contract is signed off and the final payment made.

As you can see, creating interpretation requires a lot of work - by both the client and designer. Trust, co-operation and a mutually understood process will lead to successful project completion.

Alistair Milligan is a partner in Ross Associates.

"Overacting. It is so much more real than life."

Oscar Wilde, playwright (1854 - 1900)

going live

Live events are often regarded as the most effective form of interpretation. In this article, Past Pleasures share their experience of how clients might commission a live interpretation company.

Live interpretation is a young profession. We have been going for the better part of fifteen years and as a result are considered a veteran in the business. Our experience suggests how you might work with companies delivering live interpretation - but do be aware that others in the sector may have a different approach.

All clients have a time and a place...

It is important to have enough lead-time. Most live interpreters plan their summer season the winter before. Luckily, so does the heritage industry. A bespoke event, tailored for a specific client at a specific venue, should be commissioned at least a month in advance (but longer is better!). The larger the event, the deeper the research and the more lead-time will be required. Conversely, an off-the-peg performance (a Punch and Judy show, for example) might be dropped in at a week's notice.

A preliminary meeting should include a site visit. An interpreter sees and hears things (hazards, opportunities) with an interpreter's eyes and ears. Perfect backdrops, natural amphitheatres, period-shoe trip hazards, acoustic nightmares and the like will all affect the event.

Most clients have an idea...

A good brief should be sufficiently defined to provide a structure, but without being so rigidly detailed as to preclude creative input. Clarity of purpose coupled with open-mindedness should be the goal in producing the brief.

No client ever has enough money...

Live interpretation can be expensive, and a two-handed weekend event can cost £1,500. However, that would include management, organisation, costume hire expenses, and character/period research and development. A highly specialised event may require an additional research budget, and bespoke performances will require rehearsal and development fees. Management overheads do not need to rise in proportion to the scale of an event, and long-running or serial events will eventually defray set-up costs, particularly if a local 'team' is recruited and trained. The advantage of working in this way is that the client owns a product that is tailor-made.

In terms of performers, more is usually better. One interpreter can lead a guided tour or tell stories, but not continuously for more than a couple of hours. For presentations, 'scenes' and theatre, dialogue and contention (between sexes, ranks, periods) are better than monologue. Two interpreters can cover a day between them and ensure a consistent visual presence. But three interpreters can create dramatic

opportunities out of all proportion to their number. Moreover, historically and dramatically, status is created by coterie. A lady of quality should not go without a maid. A king, to seem a king, must have his court (or some of them, at least). The nature of live interpretation is such that the visitors will be given, or will adopt roles in relation to the interpreter. But character attendants speak volumes about class and power without so much as opening their mouths.

And then...

Assuming that the date, venue, nature, scale and budget for the event have been settled, what next? To encourage improvisation and interaction, and to avoid sterility, we work from storyboards based around the research and in-house workshops, themed in accordance with whatever learning targets have been agreed. The degree to which the client is involved in the development of those storyboards is up to them. Although we are happy to research independently, curatorial expertise is eagerly sought. If the client has a script already, that is our template. We are, after all, the medium, not the message.

The choice of characters may well be defined by the nature of the event, but where the choice is less obvious, we encourage a range of dramatic 'points of view' that are between them as characteristic and typical of their time as possible. Again the degree to which the client determines the characters is up to them.

An example...

In 2003, the National Army Museum commissioned us to provide a weekend Christmas event supporting a new exhibition about the Crimean War. Amongst other entertainments, we were asked to provide a play. In a meeting with the museum's education officer, a farce described in Florence Nightingale's correspondence as "suitable reading material for convalescent soldiers" was mentioned. Partly funded by the museum, we then sourced, assessed, edited, rehearsed, produced and performed a unique piece of bespoke Victoriana.

Working with live interpretation in this way can take you and your audience to unexpected and creative places.

Tristan Langlois, Past Pleasures Ltd.



"Everyone knows there ain't no Sanity Clause"
Groucho Marx, on negotiating a contract

a good brief means no grief...



We suggest below some important elements of a good interpretive design brief.

Procedural information

- ◆ A realistic tendering timetable of at least 4 weeks.
- ◆ A client contact who can answer any questions or meet the prospective designers.
- ◆ Instructions on the tender process including how many copies are required, short-listing procedures, interview or presentation dates, and how many consultants have been invited to tender.
- ◆ Tendering fees available to pay for design concepts.
- ◆ An outline project timetable – but preferably not ending with the financial year as this is always a very pressured time.
- ◆ Any consultations needed to implement the scheme (e.g. with the client team, stakeholder organisations or local community).
- ◆ How the project will be steered and managed by the client.
- ◆ Other consultants the designer will need to work with (architect, landscape architect, conservator, etc).
- ◆ Installation responsibilities and requirements.
- ◆ Copyright ownership.

Background and context

- ◆ The background to the project, its rationale and what specific objectives the client hopes to achieve.
- ◆ The key messages to be communicated to users, plus general background information about the interpretive significance of the site, subject or facility.
- ◆ Details of any current and future plans or developments affecting the site or facility.
- ◆ Any constraints arising from SSSI, listed building or Scheduled Ancient Monument status, or from Health & Safety requirements.
- ◆ Details about the audience profile and characteristics, including any special interest groups.
- ◆ Any access, visitor management and vandalism issues.
- ◆ Whether the designer will need to secure planning permission.
- ◆ Whether there are any links to be made with formal education or with any other sites or facilities.
- ◆ Details of previous or existing interpretation and what has or hasn't worked.

Content and design instructions

- ◆ Any specific design criteria, for example relating to the choice of media and the client's corporate identity.
- ◆ Any finds or artefacts to be on display, and the environmental controls they require.
- ◆ What content (e.g. text and images) will be supplied to the designer, and whether any copyright fees will apply.

- ◆ Any storyline and picture research to be undertaken by the designer.
- ◆ New illustrations to be created by the designer.
- ◆ Whether any related facilities such as lighting and interior design are required from the designer.
- ◆ Any multiple language requirements.

Budget information

- ◆ A fixed or guideline budget.
- ◆ Funders requirements (e.g. on project reporting and evaluation)
- ◆ Information about invoicing arrangements (e.g. staged payments).
- ◆ Financial reporting or sub-contracting requirements.

Supporting information

- ◆ Site plans and photos.
- ◆ Examples of existing interpretation.
- ◆ Draft text or images (if available).
- ◆ A copy of the interpretive plan.
- ◆ Architects drawings including floor plans and elevations.

If some of these aspects have not yet been resolved, the brief should require the successful designer to work with the client to develop agreed proposals to take the project forward.

To select the best tender, the brief may also ask for information about the designers' track record, staff CVs, design philosophy, project management procedures, references, insurance and, potentially, financial profile.

Thanks to Charlie Curnow of Imagemakers and Griff Boyle of GBDM Ltd for their help with this article. Griff Boyle's new book 'Design Project Management' is reviewed on page 11.

Where to find consultants and designers

The following information sources are a useful starting point in identifying potential interpretive consultants and designers:

- ◆ Museums Association on-line suppliers directory www.museumsassociation.org.uk
- ◆ Association of Heritage Interpretation on-line consultants' directory www.heritageinterpretation.org.uk
- ◆ Museums & Galleries Yearbook: Guide to Suppliers & Consultants (ISBN 09802102842), an annual directory published by the Museums Association
- ◆ Trade shows such as the Museums and Heritage Show www.museumsandheritage.com

"A camel is a horse designed by committee."
Sir Alec Issigonis, designer of the Mini



letters

Moving On

Dear Reader

It has been a real honour to edit Interpret Scotland, but now it's time to move on.

Since its launch by Sir David Steel at the Scottish Parliament, the Interpret Scotland initiative has become established as a unique collaboration between national agencies. The journal has grown to a print run of 5,000, showcasing Scottish interpretation to a national and international readership. The Scottish Interpretation Network and their excellent 'Scotching the Myth' conference in 2002 are further signs of gathering momentum.

I am proud to have taken the journal through its first 4 years, and to have worked with a really excellent editorial team. I am delighted to hand over to James Carter, under whom I know the journal will now further blossom.

With best wishes to all those interpreting Scotland.

David Masters
Editor

Themes in Interpretation

Dear Editor

I was interested to read Sam Ham's article 'Persuasive Interpretation' in the last issue of Interpret Scotland. As one of the well-known figures in American interpretation, it was good to read on his perspective regarding thematic interpretation. So often we as visitors (as well as interpreters!) come across uninspiring themes that, although well meant, fail to grab our imagination.

As an interpreter with The National Trust for Scotland I am constantly aware of how difficult themes can be to create. Some sites are easy – where a multitude of appropriate and exciting themes can be optioned. I would actually class Sam's example, Culloden, as exactly such a site – so brimming with intense atmosphere, history and drama. Therefore I was disappointed that after such an interesting article he chose such an obvious topic to explain his theory! I would be interested to see how he would approach much more difficult sites – suggestions welcome!

Caroline Tempest
Senior Interpretive Planner, The National Trust for Scotland

Creative Corner Benchmark



A bench, 20m long and made from a single oak, stands outside the Gateway Centre at Loch Lomond Shores in Balloch and carries a 'canto' commissioned by Loch Lomond & The Trossachs National Park Authority. In twelve rhyming fragments, in three languages, I have attempted to distil the essence of the Park's interwoven natural and cultural heritage.

tlachd ri fhaighinn anns a' phàirc ♦ water ripples deep and dark
settlers brought the vital spark ♦ history's steed engraves its mark
awthing, tak tent, is naitur's wark ♦ lingering song pursues a lark
greening ferns frond oak tree bark ♦ nàdur loma-làn 'san àirc
snowbound stags stand mutely stark ♦ ilka ben maks reek its sark
eachdraidh a' mire mar marc ♦ memories cluster in the park

Tlachd ri fhaighinn anns a' phàirc (say *tlachk ree eye-unn anss a fa-ark*) is reflected in the last fragment and means pleasures are found together in the park; water, the most defining feature of the park, is one of those pleasures. The influences of early people were the first, enduring steps of the prancing stallion of history mirrored later in *eachdraidh a' mire mar marc* (say *ech-tri a meer-ugh mar ma-ark*). But Scots folk will tell you to take heed that everything is

the work of nature, whether the haunting call of birds or the ubiquitous plants and trees.

Nàdur loma-làn 'san àirc (say *na-a-turr loma la-an san a-ark*) emphasises this, meaning nature overflows its kist, or chest, The majestic red deer and ever changing weather are two more examples of the Park's natural manifestations which include the 'Scotch mist' that mountains wear as a skirt.

*Benchmark*¹ evokes the interpretation strategy of the new National Park Authority and is also used on a series of mini-benches, each with two fragments, at the Park's six 'gateway' communities. At the 'launch' of the Callander mini-bench, Marsha Luti accompanied my reading of the canto by playing on her clàrsach a tune that I composed for the occasion.

Now you've somewhere to park your behoochie and contemplate.

Michael Hamish Glen, Touchstone Heritage Management
Consultants, Tel 01583 441208

¹Chrissie Bannerman, a National Park Authority member, helped with the Gaelic, and Stuart Bailey of ID8 designed the bench itself.

"There are two ways to design: One way is to make it so simple that there are obviously no deficiencies. The other way is to make it so complicated that there are no obvious deficiencies. The first is far more difficult."

-C.A.R. Hoare

what's up elsewhere

Imperial War Museum North -
© Imperial War Museum North



Creating Imperial War Museum North The vision, the consultants and the reality

Imperial War Museum North, an entirely new branch of the Imperial War Museum, opened in Manchester in July 2002. The architectural concept for the building was powerful: a shining, aluminium-clad emblem of war in the 20th century, with the three 'shards' representing conflict on land, in the air and at sea. Our challenge was not just to realise this architectural vision, but to create an innovative and stimulating museum where the exhibitions complemented and drew strength from the architecture.

We entered the project with some trepidation; it was going to be a tall order to get the exhibition teams to devise exhibition concepts with sufficient strength and clarity to complement the powerful architecture. Indeed, it was going to be a challenge for everyone, from the core project team to the many consultants who ranged from exhibition and audio-visual designers to cost consultants and fundraisers. However, three key factors worked to turn this challenge to our advantage.

Firstly, the Museum's subject matter was, and is, extremely powerful and moving: the Museum covers not only the First and Second World Wars but any war in which Commonwealth forces have been involved from 1914 to the present day – and not just the experience of war but the impact of war on society. It was a huge and compelling subject.

Secondly, the project captured people's imagination and they became passionate about creating the new Museum, a passion which was not only able to over-ride traditional boundaries between professions, but to spur people on to work to realise new ideas. Daniel Libeskind was inspirational and

profoundly interested in the whole project – perhaps to an unusual degree for an architect. He and his team worked collaboratively with the exhibition designers and audio-visual consultants to create architectural components within the exhibitions, and to accommodate the exhibitions as an integral part of the building. Everyone worked hard not just to agree concepts but to get the detailing right.

Thirdly, as we communicated this vision to each successive wave of consultants, so the vision was honed further and its application developed in each different sphere of activity – from exhibitions to operations, fundraising and corporate identity. This is an important point since 'vision' suggests a moment of enlightenment, which becomes the beacon for all to follow. In practice, however, it is a much slower, iterative process that involves consulting widely, listening, and working to accommodate people's ideas and suggestions whilst ensuring that the 'vision' is being continually strengthened and developed.

Imperial War Museum North is certainly unique, reflecting a great deal of creativity by many talented and committed individuals. However, this could not have happened (and the project be delivered on time and on budget) without being underpinned by sound financial, people and project management skills. As Project Director, some of the key lessons I learnt are as follows:

- 1 Clear briefs with specific scopes of services, sign-offs and outputs are essential to provide a clear framework in which people can work. This must all be underpinned by rigorous financial

management, possibly with specialist cost consultants for the different parts of the project.

- 2 Selecting the right team is vital, and with consultants particularly it is worth doing thorough research on their all-round performance right through a project. You also need to weigh up whether you want a consultant from a large practice who will be juggling several clients simultaneously, or to employ a project manager directly to focus exclusively on your project. You also need to consider whether one person has the skills you require for the whole duration of a project, especially main contract as well as fit-out and exhibitions.
- 3 People management on projects is particularly challenging. There are often too few people, too many impossible deadlines and not enough time. But there are also unusual opportunities for people to shine, to contribute and to make a difference. The hardest part is to encourage individuals to take risks and inject their ideas into the project whilst retaining momentum and ensuring that all the different creative contributions fit the overall vision. But without involving people, and letting them take ownership of the vision and ideas, projects cannot fulfill their full potential.

For many the IWMN was the project of a lifetime. Its success is a testament, not only to the Director and staff now running it, but to the many, many committed people involved in its creation.

Vivienne Bennett BA AMA MBE was Project Director of Imperial War Museum North.

news & events



New faces in interpretation

After many years involvement in Interpret Scotland, Historic Scotland has finally set up an in-house Interpretation Unit. The six-strong team, based at the Agency's head-quarters building at Longmore House in Edinburgh, has been given responsibility for all aspects of interpretation across the properties-in-care estate – some 330 monuments covering 5,000 years of Scottish history.

As Historic Scotland develops its interpretation policies and practice over the coming years, we will continue to draw on and support the work of IS colleagues in making the historic environment and Scotland's rich cultural past relevant to everyone throughout their lives.

The team can be contacted on 0131 668 8600

Scottish Biodiversity Strategy – Interpretive Strategy

The Scottish Biodiversity Strategy is a major initiative emanating from the Scottish Executive. Biodiversity has been identified as a key component of sustainable development. The Strategy will guide public and business decision makers to ensure that Scotland's unique, remarkable and diverse range of species and habitats are conserved.

The SBS Steering Group, with Interpret Scotland guidance, has commissioned Stevens Associates to produce an Interpretive Strategy that will ensure Biodiversity is embedded in the everyday life and business of Scotland.

Research has shown that currently 95% of Scots have no understanding of the term biodiversity. Through interpretation the intent is to radically alter this perception. The Interpretive Strategy will seek to ensure connection of high-level strategic communications with the delivery of important messages affecting local biodiversity in ways and in language that will relate to all audiences. This will be underpinned by an exciting, imaginative communications campaign, appropriately resourced and involving key stakeholders to communicate the importance of biodiversity.

To find out more contact Bob Jones, Head of Design and Interpretative Services, Forestry Commission Scotland, bob.jones@forestry.gsi.gov.uk

Events

Interpretive Master Planning
Developing an interpretive plan for your park, heritage site or attraction.

May 11-13, 2004

Plas Tan y Bwlch, Snowdonia National Park

John Veverka and Plas Tan y Bwlch

Contact Plas Tan y Bwlch on 01766 590324, plas@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Getting the Message Across

May 25, 2004

Battleby Conference Centre, Perth

Scottish Natural Heritage / James Carter

£50 (including lunch & refreshments)

Contact Karen Smith on 01738 444177

Oral History on Display: Presenting personal testimonies for exhibitions, presentations and publications

June 12-13, 2004

The annual conference of the Oral History Society. Visit www.oralhistory.org.uk or contact Polly Russell on 020 7412 7460.

Association for Heritage Interpretation Annual Conference

September 8-10, 2004, Glasgow

The 2004 AHI annual conference will be in Glasgow.

Visit www.heritageinterpretation.org.uk for details.

Museums Association Conference and Exhibition 2004

September 13-15, 2004, Edinburgh

The Museum Association's annual conference and exhibition will be in Edinburgh.

Visit www.museumsassociation.org.uk for details.

Planning, Design, Fabrication and Evaluation of outdoor interpretive panels.

September 15-17, 2004

Plas Tan Y Bwlch, Snowdonia National Park

Plas Tan y Bwlch and John Veverka

Contact Plas Tan y Bwlch on 01766 - 590324, plas@eryri-npa.gov.uk

Publications

Design Project Management

Griff Boyle (2003) Ashgate Publishing Ltd
ISBN 0 7546 1831 5, 182pp

Design Project Management is a guide to contracting and working with designers, and to managing design projects to successful completion. This comprehensive book is written for non-designers and would be of particular interest to anyone wishing to commission a major project. The author takes you through the whole project process, from setting objectives to briefing and appointing designers, assembling in-house and external teams to completion, signing off and post project evaluation. Practical advice is also given on the tendering and contractual process, project management and financial reporting. This book is a useful guide to design project management and how to successfully manage the client - contractor relationship.

learning to let go

Let go...no way! The phrase is not in the public commissioner's vocabulary. Public funding requirements, design management procedures, risk adverse commissioners - all contribute to bland and boring interpretation projects. How can clients use artists to best effect?

Working with artists on public sector capital projects is in vogue. The potential benefits to both commissioner and artist are immense, however the right commissioning environment has to be created.

The practice of commissioning artists has evolved from design competitions to the now more widely used approach of artist placements and residencies. A critical factor in a successful artist commission is to create an environment where the artist can reveal an unknown insight. This environment needs to allow for the artist to research, probe and develop ideas in dialogue with the client. The outcome is probably not known at the start, so a working relationship based on trust is needed.

The ongoing arts programme at the new Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh gives a glimpse of how artists can interpret and give life to public space. The programme was initiated by a senior consultant who organised an Arts Committee with representation from consultants, managers, nursing staff, patients, the voluntary sector and the arts. The Committee meets once a month and have delegated project delivery to Artlink (a specialist arts and disability organisation) and Ginko. Members commit to three years' service - essential due to the long-term nature of arts projects. The Committee is mainly funded by Hospital Endowments but also needs to fundraise for each project, which it does through Artlink and Ginkgo.

The Committee appointed an artist selection sub-group, which is enriched with members from particular departments or interest areas. An important element of the Committee has been to ensure that its members are actively involved with artists and that art is produced

rather than being just a management vehicle. The enthusiasm and energy of the Committee is essential to the success of its projects.

The Committee contracted Ginkgo to develop a strategy for commissioning artists. This strategy identified a programme of commissions based on 'mapping' the new hospital both in a physical and cultural sense, and the creation of artist designed spaces. Projects to the value of £800,000 were identified and two were taken forward:

Commissions for three 'mapping' artists to work on 25-day placements within the hospital were advertised nationally. The commissions were divided into research, concept design and implementation phases. This allowed for research and artistic freedom but provided approval points within the commissioning process. Each artist found his or her own way into the hospital environment (this proved difficult and on other projects we have used facilitators to help information finding for the artist).

Each 'mapping' artist explored an aspect of the relationship between historical and contemporary hospital life. These have resulted in a proposed series of lightboxes; phrases associated with the old hospital engraved into oak boards (inspired by the names of junior doctors engraved into dining tables from the 1850s onwards); and a series of engraved milestones about travelling to the new hospital from around Scotland.

The Sanctuary was designed by leading Scottish artist, Donald Urquhart. He worked with the Chaplaincy team, hospital staff and the City's faith communities to create a space for patients, staff and visitors. Its design responds directly to the needs and aspirations

of the hospital community. It is a space that is 'other'; set aside from the clinical environment yet located at the heart of it. The structure of the space is designed to accommodate individuals seeking solace, small groups, and use by a larger hospital congregation. It references, both obliquely and directly, the natural world and wider landscape. Through this and the extensive use of natural materials an overall feeling of light yet solid simplicity has been created.

Through combining the different artists' commissions a programme of work is evolving that helps visitors locate themselves within the hospital environment in a creative and imaginative way. Over time new commissions will help articulate the spaces and provide information about the hospital's working and cultural environment.

Working with artists will reveal unexpected insights; these provide a platform for engaging with visitors in a way that will be remembered. Please take a risk on art - it's worth it.

Tom Littlewood, Ginkgo Projects Ltd.

