

Peak District Interpretation Toolkit

*for use of Peak District National Park
Authority staff only*



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About the Toolkit

Our Definition of Interpretation

Interpretation is the art of bringing to life places and objects, creating a source of inspiration by translating complex subjects into everyday language and sharing knowledge with many, that is perhaps only held by a few. Interpretation provides a place to start from, rather than a complete story, instilling a sense of curiosity and wonder that inspires visitors to find out more, return and reconnect with the National Park.

We can interpret in many ways and whilst panels and leaflets will always have a place, stories can be shared orally through guided walks and talks, experientially through education sessions and practical volunteering opportunities and through the world of new media via podcasts, social network sites and interactive websites.

About the Toolkit

This toolkit offers guidance and advice to National Park Authority staff needing to develop an interpretation idea into a real project. You may have been approached by a partner organisation looking to develop an interpretation project with you, or perhaps you have an idea of your own that you'd like to explore.

Use the [interpretation planning framework](#) to help explore and shape ideas, then download and complete the [planning for interpretation form](#) and send it to interpretation@peakdistrict.gov.uk for further help and guidance.

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Planning for Interpretation

The questions below will enable you to explore your ideas and help develop a tangible project. Resources are available as links below to help you to answer each question, whilst the downloadable [interpretation planning form](#) provides a frame for you to answer the questions.

Why do it?

Being clear now about why you want to do this will pay off, especially if the project needs to be externally funded. You need to decide what your aims and objectives are. Our [Vision for Interpretation](#) will help you think this through, as the Authority's overarching interpretation aims are included. Contacting one of [Interpretation Champions](#) and talking through your project may also help as each Champion has an area of specialism and can offer guidance and advice. Also have a look at the [hints and tips](#) on planning and producing your interpretation project.

What are you going to interpret?

As a National Park Authority we have an agreed set of [key messages](#) that outline the stories that we most want to tell. Does your idea fit within a certain message or theme? Materials that will enable you to research a particular subject are also available as links through each key message.

Who is it for?

Our target audiences each have an action plan. Think about the audience that you want to reach and use the action plans to help further develop your project.

[Children and Young People Action Plan](#)

[Under-represented Groups Action Plan](#)

[Residents Action Plan](#)

[Visitors Action Plan](#)

[Disadvantaged Groups Action Plan](#)

Where do you want to do it?

If your project will be based at one location use the [Site Category Grid](#) to identify what category of site your location is. Within the grid we have suggested the best methods of interpretation available within each type of

site, acknowledging that remote and sensitive sites need to be interpreted in a different way to accessible busy locations.

How will you do it?

Taking in to consideration your aim, theme, audience, location, key messages and stories what is the best kind of interpretative media to use? Look at the [Advantages and Disadvantages of Interpretative Media](#) section of the toolkit. Then look at our list of [Interpretation Champions](#) again, some Champions have had training in interpretation media especially new technologies such as podcasting. If you choose to use panels, you may need planning permission, the Interpretation Team will advise you about this once you've submitted your Planning for Interpretation Form.

When would like to do it?

The Interpretation Manager has an [Interpretation Work Plan](#) that sets out any major interpretation work to be delivered during this financial year. Could your project fit in with existing programs of work to save time and cost?

Is there an opportunity to work in partnership with others to deliver your project, the [Peak District Interpretation Partnership](#) has a number of partners who may like to get involved? Working with partners can also help to bring funding to a project that the Authority can match with time and skills. Have a look at the list of [Funding Opportunities](#) currently available to check funder's criteria against your projects.

Has it worked?

Thinking about how to evaluate your project during the planning stage can be really useful. How will you know whether the project has met the aims and objectives that you set out with? The Interpretation Team have put together some guidance on [Monitoring and Evaluating Interpretation](#) that will help you build these processes into your project?

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Interpretation Champions

We currently have a team of 16 Interpretation Champions who meet quarterly to help direct and shape the Authority's interpretation. Champions work within different Directorates and Teams and all have a particular specialism that could help you. Read what interpretation means to each of the Champions and find out how they could help you. You can contact any of them either by email or phone, details are listed for each person, or if you are interested in championing interpretation yourself have a look at the [Interpretation Champions Group Terms of Reference](#) and email the interpretation team.

Carol Parsons, Recreation Strategy Officer, Recreation Strategy Team



“To me interpretation is explaining the significance of people and places. It’s highlighting that *one thing* that people will remember and take away with them. A greater understanding helps people to value our special landscapes. The story of people is always one people are interested in – who lived there, what they ate and so on. I think we have to be careful to interpret that which is unique and special rather than try to cover everything with a load of bland information you could find anywhere. Always think who the audience is before deciding on which interpretive media to use rather than deciding the media first.

I can update the visitor pages of our web site to provide new and better information. I always carry a Flip video recorder around with me and have produced a number of simple videos with them. I have also used audacity software for producing podcasts and have worked with contractors to produce a mobile phone tour and a series of interpretive panels. I have a whole box file on the theory of interpretation should anyone be interested, as I did a module on it as part of my recreation management degree, as well as an interpretation plan for my final year dissertation. I can also point people to useful web sites.”

Contact Carol on 01629 816297 or email her at carol.parson@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Gail Widdowson, Property Manager, Estates



“Land and property owned and managed by the Authority include some of the best examples of biodiversity, wildlife habitats and archaeology in the Peak District. These are iconic landscapes and popular areas for visitors and recreation. The Authority’s properties provide an excellent opportunity to communicate the our key messages and promote understanding through a variety of methods of interpretation. This work is already being delivered by field staff with resources funded by Property Services and needs to be further supported and directed by the Authority.

As we continue to seek partners and transfer properties to other organisations under the asset management plan, it is important that the Authority is able to transmit that interpretation is a management priority. This will require us to work with external partners to ensure that our key messages are sustained through this transition period and into the future. The Interpretation Champion's group provides this support and as a Champion myself I bring my knowledge of property management to the group, whilst representing my colleagues in Property Services."

Contact Gail on 01629 816353 or by email at gail.widdowson@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Sue Beswick, Visitor Services Manager



"The Peak District has traditionally been at the forefront of visitor information and interpretation; some of the very first interpretation work in the UK was carried out in the Peak District by Don Aldridge when he was working as an information officer for the Authority. As a National Park Authority, interpretation is an important part of what we do in terms of communicating the values, benefits and special qualities of the National Park. Through effective interpretation and inspirational ways of communicating there is the opportunity to reach both communities and visitors.

Visitor profiles differ across NP visitor and cycle hire centres and key visitor sites and audiences vary across the year. At national park visitor centres, interpretation is incorporated into displays, exhibits and information with the aim of providing a National Park experience and this sets our centres apart from tourist information centres. The aim of interpretation displays at visitor centres is to reveal hidden stories and meanings; bring places, objects and ideas to life; create thought-provoking and memorable experiences; connect us with our natural and cultural heritage; deepen our understanding and expand our horizons.

Part of the visitor services role within the Authority is to understand visitor expectations, needs and motivations and then to engage with visitors to deliver key and sustainability messages, information and high standards of service predominantly at national park visitor and cycle hire centres and in working with local authority, tourism partners and other organisations. "

Aidan Richardson, Transport Policy Officer

"I think that transport acts as a broad enabler for the overall interpretation elements of the National Park – as it allows people to access and enjoy the valued characteristics of the National Park in the first place. By encouraging more sustainable access through positive influence and interpretation, we can highlight the impacts that traffic and travel can have on the valued characteristics of the National Park that people have travelled here to see. There are a range of means and ways of accessing the National Park without a car, such as some of the bus services part subsidised by the Authority, or the excellent rail services provided from Sheffield and Manchester. This can also reduce the stress and cost of finding and paying for a car parking space, and gives people more time to relax and enjoy the scenery – creating a better experience and improving the way visitors interpret the National Park overall.

By improving the visitor experience through transport and travel in the National Park, we hope that people will

go away with a greater understanding not only of what they have seen, but also the wider environmental issues we face as a society caused by activity such as travel. This is something which as an interpretation champion I feel quite strongly about, as I believe we need develop sustainable solutions to the potential environmental, social and political challenges we may face in the future. There is no reason why a rural landscape such as the Peak District should not be an appropriate place to start.”

Contact Aidan on 01629 816**350** or by email at aidan.richardson@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Garrie Tiedeman, Landscape Architect

“Over the years I have seen many different forms of interpretation some brilliant, some good and some ... well it would have been better not to have even tried. Landscape is one of the hardest subjects to interpret and can only be successfully achieved by linking it to the people who lived and worked there, the people who created the landscapes that we appreciate now. I can provide guidance on how landscape can be interpreted, both for existing and future landscapes, what should be included and where the best locations for interpretation are and how interpretation can be integrated into existing features and artefacts. Good interpretation inspires and informs people but why stop there?”

Contact Garrie on 01629 816**231** or by email at garrie.tiedeman@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Mandy Sims, Learning and Development Officer, Losehill Hall

“I like the idea of being a ‘champion’ for interpretation in the National Park, as I believe passionately in the power of good interpretation to help people find real meaning in places. At Losehill Hall, I’m responsible for the suite of interpretation training courses that we run and I love seeing people inspired to go back to their own special places and help make them meaningful for their visitors. In the Peak District, there are so many stories being told well and so many more to tell, and I am pleased to have a chance to play a small part in that.”

Contact Mandy on 01433 622**461** or by email at mandy.sims@peakdistrict.gov.uk

Jenny Hanshaw, Visitor Centre Manager



“To me, interpretation is achieved, through a range of experiences; visual, face to face & audio. Whether centre assistants are engaging with young groups through activities or talks, or providing written information for visitors, the experience that each person has, is a major factor in their visit to the Visitor Centre and to the Peak District. The aim is for visitors to our centre to have learned & experienced something new about the national park and local area that they may not have otherwise. In the case of Castleton Visitor Centre, visitors can virtually experience what it is like to fly on a hang glider or learn about the landscape and how people lived many centuries ago, through vision and touch.

Interpretation therefore provides a unique learning experience and enhances our knowledge and zest for life through effective interpretive media that allows our imagination and our senses to unfold.

As an Interpretation champion, we can support others in their quest to ‘get it right’. Visitor Centres have to cater for many types of Visitor and we have gained some good knowledge and understanding of what works well and

what doesn't over the years.”

Contact Jenny on 01629 816574 or by email at jenny.hanshaw@peakdistrict.gov.uk

To be completed

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Gordon Danks

David Bent

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Blog at WordPress.com.