

REPORT OF DISCOVERY TEAM

SUBJECT: A REVIEW OF THE INTERPRETATION WORK OF PEMBROKESHIRE COAST NATIONAL PARK AUTHORITY

Purpose of Report

The report summarises the work of the Interpretation Officer(s) working for Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority. A presentation will be provided to members of the Operational Review Committee to illustrate the range and reach of the work undertaken.

Introduction/Background

The National Park Authority's interpretation work is undertaken by 2 members of staff on a job share basis, both are part of the Discovery Team based at the Llanion Park offices.

There are often misconceptions about the role and function of interpretation and how it sits alongside other activity in an organisation such as ours. The Association of Heritage Interpretation (of which PCNPA is a member) describes heritage interpretation as:

'Primarily a communication process that helps people make sense of, and understand more about, a site/location, collection or event. It can:

- Bring meaning to your cultural or environmental resource, enhancing visitor appreciation and promoting better understanding. As a result your visitors are more likely to care for what they identify as a precious resource.*
- Enhance the visitor experience, resulting in longer stays and repeat visits. This will lead to increased income and create employment opportunities.*
- Enable communities to better understand their heritage, and to express their own ideas and feelings about their home area. As a result individuals may identify with lost values inherent in their culture.'*

However, interpretation should not be confused with marketing, which is primarily about 'the action or business of promoting and selling products or services, including market research and advertising'.

Some examples of interpretation work undertaken by PCNPA in the past 12 months illustrate the breadth of opportunities provided to reach a wide range of audiences at many different levels.

Changing Coasts

The Changing Coasts project was set-up to capture Pembrokeshire's shifting coastal landscape on camera and in doing so create an important archive which anyone visiting the National Park can contribute to. The project uses a

network of posts at specific locations along the Pembrokeshire Coast Path at which passers-by are encouraged to stop, get out their camera/mobile phone to capture coastal change by taking images in different seasons, at different times of the day, at high and low tide.” There are now 14 posts at locations along the coast path including Abereiddy, Newgale and Porthgain. To date over 400 photographic contributions have been made. At the end of the project, the pictures will be used to produce a time-lapse film for circulating on social media. <http://www.pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk/?PID=756>. The project was recently filmed for ITV’s Coast and Country programme.

Community Art Project at Carew Mill

With funding for the project from the Little Green Grant fund, local artist Helen Astley worked with children from Sageston school to create a mural telling the story of ‘From Seed to Plate’ designed with the children and completed over a period of 6 months ending in June 2016

Carew Mill Interactives and water wheel film projection

A project to enhance interpretation at Carew Mill included the commissioning of a film of a working water wheel projected onto a wall in the Mill to add to the atmosphere and ‘storytelling’ at this location. The project also included commissioning and installation of three interactive displays in the Mill: quern, water power and pulley power.

Community panel at Boggy Lane, Hook

Work with the Hook History Society to produce an interpretation panel telling the story of coal and limestone in the area.

Storytelling training for NP staff

Two sessions of training were delivered at Carew Castle and Castell Henllys by a professional story teller for the staff at these locations, and others in the NP, providing them with an opportunity to increase their skills set and deliver a wider range of activity. One result being that two staff members have recently been filmed telling stories for the Year of Legends project mentioned below.

Year of Legends

With funding provided through Visit Wales a series of short films has been produced re-telling local legends and featuring locations within the National Park. Staff from both Carew Castle and Castell Henllys feature in the films. In addition, a collection of audio files of local ‘Pembrokeshire stories’ has been produced. These pieces of work will be shared in various formats/locations throughout 2017, the Year of Legends.

Castell Henllys Barefoot Trail

With funding from a various sources the Castell Henllys Barefoot Trail was an interpretive project which sought to bring a new dimension to the visitor experience at the site. Making use of an underused and under promoted area of the site and providing a feature attractive to families coming to Castell Henllys the project achieved at least two ‘interpretive goals’, introducing visitors to the streamside environment at Castell Henllys and providing a ‘sensory experience’, through the barefoot trail. Skills for Action trainees were

involved in building the trail designed by the National Park Authority's Interpretation Officer.

Interpretation Plan for Haverfordwest Library

The Interpretation Officer produced an interpretation plan for the new library in Haverfordwest to include National Park messages and images dispersed throughout the library rather than concentrated in the TIC area. The plan was well received and looks set to be incorporated into the final design for the library.

Comparisons

Locally, there are few other organisations with a heritage interpretation officer capacity. Organisations such as PLANED, who as part of their work manage community based projects tend to outsource interpretation work as and when required. Similarly the National Trust have more centralised functions for delivering their heritage interpretation requirements. Interpretation services are offered by numerous consultancies based in Wales or England and these have been used in recent years by PCNPA where the requirement has exceeded the capacity of our interpretation officers. A recent example of this was the Origins project delivered at Castell Henllys.

Across the wider National Park family many Authorities maintain 'in-house' interpretation functions, usually based alongside education or communications teams.

Options

The existing interpretation role is delivered as a job share (approximately 4 days week), the post was reduced from a full-time equivalent job share in 2016 to accommodate the needs of the existing job share partners.

The level of internal and externally funded interpretation work has continued to grow over recent years. In particular the demand for interpretive skills to be applied to larger projects has meant that the NPA Interpretation Officer(s) has had the opportunity to contribute to a range of initiatives including plans to re-locate Haverfordwest Library and the Constable exhibition at Oriel y Parc.

The interpretation services provided by the NPA are valued and have an important role in ensuring that the Authority continues to engage with a range of audiences visiting (and living in) the National Park. A diminished role in this area may result in a reduction in both quality and reach with regard to National Park interpretation. Outsourcing our interpretative work is a consideration, but may be less effective in terms of ensuring the ongoing process of development and innovation continues. Such is the range and scope of activity that it is likely to be delivered most effectively when there is at least some responsibility 'in-house' for this work within the Authority.

Financial considerations

Budgets available to deliver internal interpretation work are limited (less than £2.5k in the allocated cost centre), however externally funded work – including small scale community projects, ensures that the interpretative output continues to grow. There are opportunities to tap in to significant funding streams in order to continue to deliver high quality interpretation in the National Park. The planned Interreg (European

Regional Development Fund) project, Celtic Routes, is an example of a funded project with a clear focus on delivering new interpretative content.

Risk considerations

Interpretation may be an undervalued aspect of the Pembrokeshire Coast National Park visitor experience. It's difficult to know how much an encounter with the interpretation adds value to the quality of that experience, but recent evaluation of some of the work described earlier in the report suggests that it is welcomed.

There are very few financial, legal or political drivers relating to our interpretative work, however there is good evidence to suggest that effective interpretation, pitched at the right level, can help in attracting new audiences and can (either in terms of content or opportunities to participate) make a contribution to individual health and wellbeing. This is an agenda that has political currency at the moment and an area of interpretation work which could be developed in the future.

Compliance

The Interpretation work undertaken promotes Park purpose and is in line with corporate objectives, providing an opportunity to reach new audiences and communicate more effectively in innovative ways through a range of media.

Human Rights/Equality issues

There are no human rights issues associated with this area of work that we are aware of.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

Interpretation has the capacity to raise awareness of issues relating to biodiversity and environmental sustainability.

Welsh Language statement

Interpretation is produced bilingually.

Conclusion

The report aims to provide members with a review of the Authority's Interpretation work, demonstrating its breadth and reach as an area of activity. Increasingly the role of interpreters is seen as an important aspect of any work which seeks to engage the public with heritage. New work is increasingly project focused and fits into a wider brief which is often externally funded.

Recommendation

No recommendations as part of this report.

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