

Simple ideas for sharing your stories through interpretation

What is this document?

This document has been devised to help those involved in commissioning interpretation.

It should be read as a guidance note with the aim of highlighting the key issues and suggesting approaches to consider before commissioning and producing your interpretive solution.

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What is interpretation?

Interpretation is communication... it is about telling a story... Or put simply it is telling the 'story' of an object, site or trail to visitors in a clear and engaging way.

Interpreting or TELLING stories well can turn a visitor attraction into a visitor experience by providing a way to share what makes a site or place unique or special. It can provide a consistent message that can be accessible 24 hours a day by large numbers of visitors.

It can also CONNECT one site to another, increasing engagement and visitor understanding; it can broaden the visitor experience by encouraging further exploration. It can play a way-finding role, SIGNPOSTING the visitor onto the next stop on the trail and therefore promoting connectivity across a single attraction, or a collection of related sites.

Good interpretation can promote a sense of OWNERSHIP that will encourage both visitors and local communities to look after the site. It is a vital part of how people experience the places they visit - our towns and countryside, our historic sites and monuments, our museums and galleries.

Good interpretation will leave your visitors feeling connected, inspired and alive with curiosity. They will UNDERSTAND your site, collection or story better. They will ENJOY themselves more and are more likely to RETURN (or at least tell their friends and family to visit).

There are many ways to tell your story. Stories can be told through interpreters (people), signage, street furniture and public art to name but a few. Good interpretation can:

- Bring meaning to your place, enhance visitor appreciation and promote 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.

The vision for interpretation in Northern Ireland – uncover our stories

Today the whole world is within your reach. Cheap and regular flights and the internet mean that we now have access to parts of the world that we previously never knew existed.

We're living in exciting times and as a result tourists are becoming more and more sophisticated in their expectations. They expect seamless experiences, they want to learn about and celebrate the best that your place has to offer. They want to leave feeling part of your place or your story.

Northern Ireland has got what it takes to compete and our vision is to engage with our visitors, to celebrate our past, present and future; to tell our stories in a forward thinking, self-aware, self believing and authentic way.

Northern Ireland is Visitor Inspired

In January 2008 NITB embarked on a journey to develop a brand for Northern Ireland Tourism: to create a framework to determine Northern Ireland's future product development, visitor experience delivery and marketing communications.

Working with almost 1,000 stakeholders and industry partners, a brand strategy was developed that defines all that is unique, precious and special about Northern Ireland tourism, for Northern Ireland is no ordinary place.

'This is Northern Ireland!' is our brand engagement theme.

The industry call to action is **'Be Visitor Inspired.'**

A blueprint for NI tourism

Tourism in Northern Ireland is evolving. The work that you are doing is helping to position Northern Ireland as a place with a difference.

It is our aim to create a blueprint for Northern Ireland tourism that will help focus our collective efforts, capitalise on our ongoing work to date and give us an even greater competitive edge in the future.

This blueprint is all about being visitor inspired. It is not designed to be a list of do's and don'ts but an aide to creating ideas of your own to make the tourism experience even better for you, your staff and your visitor.

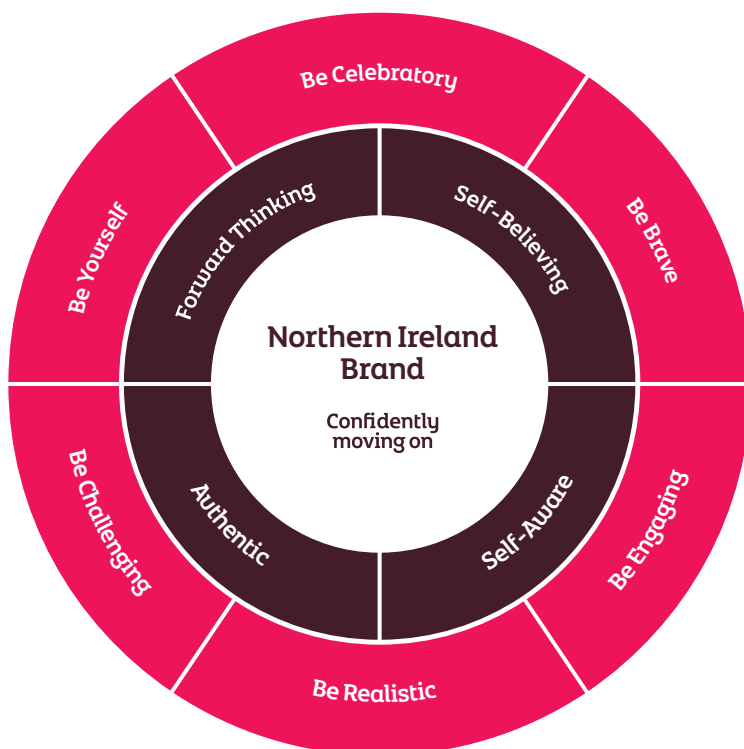
The new Northern Ireland is forward thinking. We know who we are, what we stand for, and what we value. But we need to spread this message to visitors to ensure we meet and exceed their expectations.

This project will be one of the first to put the values of being 'Visitor Inspired' into practice in the public forum. We have the opportunity to uncover our stories for visitors by producing an exceptional standard of interpretation that will give Northern Ireland another foothold in the competitive world of tourism.

The brand in your hand

Collectively we have defined a set of values that reflect who we are, what we stand for and what we offer. We've defined a way of behaving – a way of being – that will make every visitor's experience in Northern Ireland truly special and memorable.

By consistently integrating these values and behaviours into everything we do, even in the simplest of actions we can give visitors an authentic taste of the real Northern Ireland – the place we know and love.



16 steps to becoming visitor inspired

This document does not sit in isolation. We are developing an information resource to help and encourage everyone involved in the Northern Ireland tourism industry to become more focused on the visitor experience – to become more “visitor inspired”. Whilst the aims of this particular document are to help create the best visitor experience through good interpretation, a background to the visitor inspired concept and way of thinking can be found at www.nitb.com/visitorinspired/16steps We've included 5 of the most relevant steps below to get you started:

- **First impressions really do count**

It's the little things that make lasting impressions. For example, a fabulous sign that includes an interactive element to engage with children is pointless if beside it is an old and overflowing litter bin.

- **Don't sell the destination sell the story**

Give your visitors the chance to create a memory every step of the way. Engage your visitors by creating Kodak moments. Use your interpretation to create another way to tell your story and get your visitors involved.

- **Be authentic**

Be authentic, be true, be honest. Be proud of and celebrate all that is unique and special about Northern Ireland, all that makes your site a destination. Northern Ireland's authenticity adds to the visitor experience – and it creates lasting memories – so tell the visitor the real story in simple language.

- **Set high standards**

Set challenges that will push everyone to the limits, and create something exceptional.

- **Be world class**

Create show stoppers and it will add real value to your visitors' experience. Chances are they've been to some far flung places and had exceptional experiences. Northern Ireland can compete with the best, so make sure you provide the best.

Telling your story couldn't be easier

It's about engaging

Interpretation is about story telling; it's about telling the story of a particular place or site. To tell the story you have to get the visitor's attention and then keep it. So when planning, try to understand what will best engage with your visitor through simple but clever visuals and language.

Thinking about layering your story with specific elements designed for different audiences can make the difference between an information post and an engaging interpretive sign – think about incorporating textured areas for rubbings for kids, puzzles for adults, photo opportunities for everyone!

No matter how you plan to share your story with visitors, the same simple thinking should be applied to help you produce even better interpretation.

The Northern Ireland tourism industry as a whole is firmly focused on improving our visitors' experiences.

5 simple steps to delivering visitor inspired interpretation

1. **Get organised, get a plan.**

Clearly define why, what, who for, when and how you should interpret. Set and agree a realistic budget. Plan for the future. Know how your story will evolve and how your site will be refreshed and maintained.

Test, test and test again.

2. **Get in the experts.**

Interpretation might look easy but it can be difficult to do well. Know the law and your responsibilities (planning permission, copyright issues, accessibility requirements, insurance requirements etc).

3. **Know your visitors.**

Make sure the story you tell is right for them. Test, test and test again.

4. **Layer your story.**

Don't try to tell your entire story in one go! Mix your media. Stimulate all senses and be interactive.

5. **Dull is boring.**

Short is sweet. Don't preach.

Telling your story through the values of being visitor inspired is about anticipating what your visitor wants and needs today and tomorrow. It is about celebrating the best that your area offers, knowing what is unique and special and using it as the focal point.

With this in mind ask yourself - why use interpretation. Is it for educational purposes? Is it for conservation? Is it for visitor management? Or simply to enhance the visitor experience?

Having a key focus will help you make the right decisions for each site.

Of course there will be many more things to be taken into consideration when interpreting a visitor trail for a large historically significant site such as Carrickfergus Castle, than there will be for a short coastal path, so take only the elements of this guidance that are appropriate to the size and scale of your story.

Ready? Then let's begin

The guidance within this document is not meant to be a set of strict prescriptive guidelines to be followed to the letter, but rather offer suggestions and guiding principles based around best practice. However, in the case studies, you will find some examples of how a system following best practice could look, that can be used as inspiration and tailored to suit the specific needs of your site(s) and its visitors.

Get a plan: a long term plan. That's a novel place to start

Before you commission any work at all, speak to your visitors (existing and potential). Do they find your story interesting, what do they think of how you propose developing your site and telling your story?

Define how you will manage your site today, tomorrow and in 5 years time.

Take this information and use it as the basis for your plan.

Get in the experts. Start a revolution

It is inevitable that there will be many people with a passion and opinion in how your story should be told.

Remember that too many cooks can spoil the broth and if too many people 'have their say' the information and ultimately the visitor experience can be diluted. So, consider the essential skills you need for this project and create a core team who have the final say.

Use the resources that you have on offer, don't overlook your local community: they may have a greater understanding of the area than you think. For larger more historical sites it may be useful to work with an archaeologist or historian to make sure your information is spot on.

Know your visitor. Be Visitor Inspired

THE key factor to success is to know your audience – who are they and what are their needs?

Offer a targeted experience by really getting under the skin of your visitors:

- Why do they come? How many of them are there?
- How often do they come?
- Where are they from? Are they domestic or international visitors?
- What interests them?
- How long do they stay? And how can we encourage them to stay longer?
- Are they repeat visitors?

Layer your story. Stay focused

What do you want your visitor to take away with them? Each site is unique; it tells its own story. You have your own clearly defined reasons for wanting to tell your story.

It is important to know what you want to achieve through your interpretation. Depending on your audience it can range from sharing facts and figures to simply encouraging your visitor to sit, relax, enjoy the view or create a Kodak moment.

Your site may have more specific objectives, particularly if you cater to groups of school children. Consider the key objectives below and focus on the ones best suited to your individual sites.

- Learning objectives
- Emotional objectives
- Behavioural objectives
- Promotional objectives

When considering your key objectives it is also important to think about the life expectancy of your interpretation, how it can be updated to reflect changes in your story. This will be covered further in the materials section on page 9.

Dull is boring. Short is sweet. Don't preach

Northern Ireland has so much to be proud of. Breathtaking scenery, amazing hospitality, superb attractions, a unique culture, cuisine that is out of this world and stories in abundance.

Your story needs to be tailored: unique to your site and specific to your audience.

It needs to be told in a way that is informative and engaging. It needs to be kept simple. Don't bombard the visitor. Don't lose the key focus.

There will be stories that are unique to your sites and this will offer a freshness and new perspective for the visitors. These are the stories and information that will best engage – just remember that keeping it simple is best.

We have identified three key themes to help focus Northern Ireland's stories:

Life, Legend and Landscape

Bearing these themes in mind should help you to remain focused on the key messages and offering of your specific site(s), keep consistency throughout, and allow you to collect your stories in an ordered and easily understood fashion.

The themes are described in more detail on page 8.

We've got some basics, now what...?

1. Be celebratory – work together

Tourism is everyone's business. We live in exciting times. Northern Ireland is emerging as a vibrant dynamic destination with a culture of its own and an impressive range of facilities. We're moving forward with confidence.

We're in this together. So we need to work together as one to ensure that every visitor experiences the best that Northern Ireland has to offer.

We need to think and act like a visitor and that means connecting your story with other related stories and sites to help the visitor truly engage and get the best from their time in Northern Ireland.

We need to think as a whole and get connected. This is key to making our visitors feel that they are on a journey of discovery and encouraging them to continue that journey onto the next site on the trail: to uncover the next chapter of the story.

This can be easily achieved by working collectively to choose and agree:

- stories and sites that are related and should be included or mapped on all materials
- which themes and stories should be told at each site
- which materials should be used
- a type or shape of sign that could be used at all related sites
- a colour that could be used on materials at all related sites
- a tone of voice that reflects the Northern Ireland tourism brand and that could be used to tell all stories

Each of these will be developed in more detail further into this document.

2. Be yourself – we're not Disney

Northern Ireland is not manufactured. Every site on every trail is different. Ground conditions, purpose, exposure to the elements, access, to name but a few variables, mean that no one type of sign or installation will work for every site. A degree of flexibility in your system is advisable. Assess your needs and put in place a fit for purpose solution.

This means that within a consistent look and feel, each part of the system will be specific to its own area.

However, no matter what materials, colours or stories you chose to tell; they must have an affinity with the place in order to Be Visitor Inspired.

3. Be engaging – create the best journey possible for your visitors

Create the best Northern Ireland visitor experience possible by having as many common elements as you can at related sites. For the visitor this will show they are on a journey and will hopefully encourage them to uncover yet more stories at related sites.

You can do this in several ways. Using consistent materials, colours, typography that reflect the uniqueness of the trail all help create a deeper sense of place.

Later in this document we have detailed several suggested approaches that reflect the uniqueness of Northern Ireland and best practice in interpretation development.

4. Be realistic – put quality over quantity

"Many" or "Bigger" doesn't always mean better. You may have the budget to commission a large interpretative panel - but stop and think if it is really appropriate to your site and if it will enhance the experience that the visitor will have at your site.

Until you are certain of what each site's requirements are, quantity, size, level of interpretation it will be difficult to assign a set budget. It may be the case that your funding will only allow for a couple of pieces of interpretation to be put in place in each financial quarter or each year, but getting it right and building upon this good foundation would be more in line with creating a visitor inspired experience.

The nuts and bolts of story telling - getting the basics right

There are several compulsory elements of information that must be included on all signage. The trail logo (if applicable), website and map are all essential items. The most important piece of information that should be included is the story itself.

When developing an interpretive panel you should include a story, points of interest and 2-3 insights. It is also important to be clear and concise, and use as few words that still allow you to get across what you need to say.

Themes

We have developed three key themes that sit alongside each other. Life, Legend, and Landscape. Choose which one is the lead for each site and let it take centre stage. The themes have been selected to help you make sense of the information gathered and focus on what is unique about your site.

Life

Life covers all aspects of the living world from human endeavour to animal and plant life. Make the content relevant to the site and more than just interesting to read.

Legend

Legend relates to the stories that we are surrounded by in Northern Ireland. Anecdotes, myths and even tall tales created to explain what we believe to be true but cannot be proved.

Landscape

Landscape should be used to explain the site environment both natural and built. Why things look the way they do now and what they once were. Don't overlook the obvious and find ways to describe/visualise things that are there but can't be seen; ie hidden ruins or shipwrecks.

NB. The notion of Past, Present & Future should also be kept to front of mind. For example, even historic sites that will have a bias towards the interpretation of the past will also have current finds and excavations, a role to play with wildlife and of course future ambitions for learning and development.

Copywriting

Target your copy for a reading age of 9-12 year olds, this will be an accessible reading age for the majority of your visitors. Use short sentences and paragraphs and remember to keep text blocks short. As a guideline an interpretive panel should contain no more than 200 words.

Connect with your visitor. Here are some tips to help you engage:

1. Address the reader in the first person. ie 'if you look to your left, you can see'.
2. Use active rather than passive verbs. ie 'we manage this site' rather than 'this site is managed by'.
3. Use metaphors, analogies and comparisons to help visitors relate to what you are describing. ie 'Finn McCool would have worn a shoe size 42'.
4. Use humour – see point 3!
5. Ask questions and engage your visitors' imaginations. ie 'Where do you think Bushmill's Whiskey got its name from?'
6. Write in short sentences and paragraphs.
7. Use plain English.
8. Use pictures where it makes sense to do so. ie. it would be easier to share the geological story of Giant's Causeway using pictures and words rather than just words.

Do not bamboozle your visitors with jargon or technical terms this will only confuse them and leave them disillusioned with the message.

You will need to have a consistent tone across your copy. This should be entertaining and engaging. It should bring your stories to life.

Above all, remember that your visitors are on holiday or on a day trip. You're telling a story. It should be fun!

Typography and point size – Getting your message across

As part of our new brand, NITB use a specially commissioned typeface called 'Northern Ireland'. The typeface is confident and authentic and reflective of the Northern Ireland tourism brand. It is easy to read and we would recommend you use it on all appropriate interpretation.

To access the typeface, email brand@nitb.com

Research shows that people absorb information as follows:

- Headline
- Main picture
- Sub heading
- Introduction
- Bullet points
- Further illustrations
- Main text

So, in addition to looking attractive, interpretive panels must tell their story succinctly to grab their interest and get them to want to know more.

It is also incredibly important to remember that people view interpretation from a distance and we would suggest the following guideline minimum point sizes:

- Headline: 72 point
- Sub heading: 60 point
- Introduction: 32 point
- Text, captions etc: 24 point

(Please note that point sizes can and should be adjusted according to the individual sign format).

Colour Palette

NITB have developed a colour palette that can be used to accent interpretation. Where possible choose colours from the palette that have an affinity with the site.

To access the colour palette, email brand@nitb.com

Linking Stories and Mapping

Each piece of interpretation on any trail is intended to be a destination marker - to assure people that they have arrived at a point (or the next point) of their chosen trail.

Including maps can highlight progress, location and potential next destination. In addition maps can help 'cross-sell' other related sites on the trail.

Any map should contain information on distance and/or time to the next point of interest. There are many types of mapping available.

Many places have adopted the approach of enhancing the familiar. Regular maps are given extra information in the form of '3-dimensional' illustrations of key buildings, features and points of interest that allow the user to use the built environment or landscape to navigate (see Belfast City Map example).

By using a system that is widely adopted, more visitors will be familiar and more comfortable with it.



Belfast City Map

Materials & Finishes

When choosing materials, it is not necessary to select the same material for each site on the trail (although this may lead to better economies of scale), but it is important to choose what is appropriate for the site and the interpretative solution located on it.

Don't forget that your choice of material can be a story in its own right – opting for Mournes Granite is a wonderful introduction to the story of the how our ancestors lived and worked in the Mournes etc.

Think about:

1. Does the material look out of place? It should be reflective of the place.
2. Does the material disappear into its environment? Your visitor needs to be drawn to it.
3. Is the material fit for purpose - consider the nature of the ground, exposure to weather, sea water, sand, sun, graffiti (and subsequent cleaning) and vandalism?
4. Does the material say something about Northern Ireland – if at all possible (and pragmatic) choose natural materials that are indigenous to Northern Ireland.

All materials used should be of the best quality and its full range of finishes should be explored. For example, Granite can be left unfinished showing saw marks, sandblasted to give it a rough, but regular, finish, highly polished, have a satin look

or be honed to give a matte finish. Most materials will have a multitude of finishing techniques and it is the combination of these that can create something beautiful.

Working with support brands/logos

Where logos are a mandatory condition of funding then they should be contained on the lowest right or left hand corner of the printable area of any panel or sign. This will limit clutter and allow the visitors' engagement with the story to be uninterrupted.

To access NITB's logos, email brand@nitb.com

Engagement/ interactive strategy

If at all possible leave room in your signage system for an 'interactive' element. This can be as simple as a web address where visitors can learn more, an engraving that allows rubbings to be taken or something bespoke to your site that encourages any sort of participation by the visitor.

Embrace the next generation of technology

There are more and more technologies that can be incorporated into signage systems. Embedded RFID (Radio Frequency Identification) chips, Bluetooth and even 'augmented reality' [a live direct or indirect view of a physical real-world environment whose elements are merged with (or augmented by) virtual computer-generated imagery] can all play a role in enhancing the visitor experience and are being increasingly adopted by museums for example. However, it is very important to think long term about employing such technologies. Investment cost aside you must also consider the need for updates and maintenance and critically the requirement in most cases for a handheld 'reader' device to go along side the use of these technologies.

Test, test and test again

Ask visitors what they thought of your story, your interpretation and their experience. Ask how it could be improved and keep this front of mind when developing new interpretation or refreshing your current stories.

What this could mean for the Visitor

Many visitors to Northern Ireland come to enjoy our beautiful scenery and unique heritage and stories.

Much has been invested in recent years to develop and enhance some of Northern Ireland's most loved assets.

To get you started and for demonstration purposes, we have considered how the best practice approach to 'telling stories' could be applied across three trails:

Saint Patrick's Trail

Causeway Coastal Route

Mournes Coastal Route

All 3 offer a totally unique experience for visitors; they tell their own stories. So it is right that each proposed approach has been made taking into consideration the story, the setting and the environment on each trail.

We have developed a strong conceptual rationale for each trail, in line with the Northern Ireland tourism brand. This has informed each and every creative recommendation from:

- 3D forms and formats for the systems

Our 12 suggested formats include:

1. Finger Post
2. Pedestals (A4)
3. Interpretative (A2)
4. Interpretative (1 metre)
5. Wall Mounted
6. Totem
7. Benches
8. Viewpoint Sign
9. Landmark Sign
10. Safety Railing
11. Sculptural
12. Ground / Platform

- Suggested materials
- Colours
- Typography and point sizes
- Images
- Suggestions for a simple engagement device along each route

In all cases we are recommending logical and straightforward creative thinking. This is Northern Ireland after all!

Let's get started-

Saint Patrick's Trail

The thinking behind the approach

The Saint Patrick's Trail is a 92 mile driving route taking in Armagh through Newry and Downpatrick, ending in Bangor which ties together a series 32 of key Patrician and Christian Heritage sites.

The route reflects a great many unique environments with individual stories to tell, this trail communicates connections to the story of Saint Patrick.

Like the Causeway Coastal Route, it's important that the many sites along the route are connected with direct and literal ideas in order that 'unfamiliar' visitors can quickly and easily identify a site as being part of the trail.

To that end we would suggest the following as a guide to interpretative signage along the Saint Patrick's Trail.



3D Forms & format ideas

There are two overarching concepts that lie behind the creative suggestions for Saint Patrick's Trail signage system.

The overall form is taken from a profile of the existing brown sign road marker for the trail (see example 1). This identity is itself taken from a Bishop's hat and we recommend using it as the shape for all related interpretation, (see example 2).

In addition, we recommend a reference to the trinity in the shape of the signage. For example, opting for 3 sided signage and by where possible introducing 3 materials (see example 3).

We would envisage a base range of around 12 sign formats to cope with the environments found along the Saint Patrick's Trail. This ranges from finger posts to totems, see sketches below.

Please Note: This range is indicative only. Further designs based on the same principles could and should be developed that are bespoke to the individual needs of a particular site.

EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



EXAMPLE 3



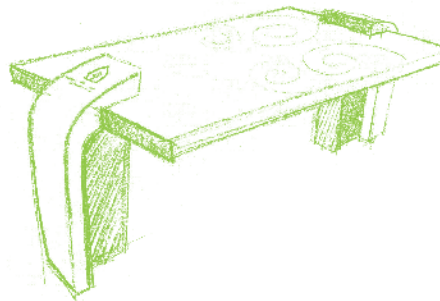
LANDMARK 'GATEWAY' POST



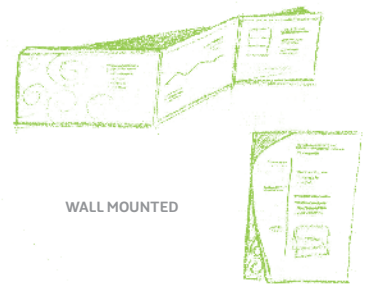
TRIANGULAR SECTION



INTERPRETATIVE SEATING



WALL MOUNTED

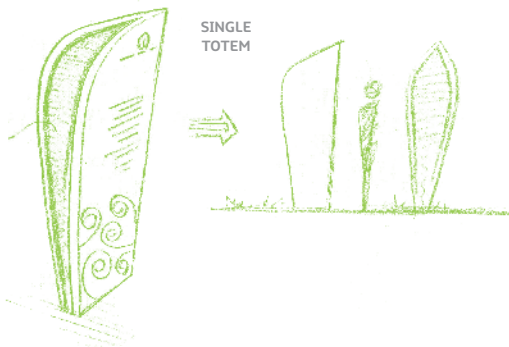


BENCH



INITIAL SKETCHES ACROSS VARIOUS FORMATS

ROUGH SURFACE FINISH



SINGLE TOTEM



Materials

Where possible choose materials that have an affinity with the site.

For Saint Patricks Country, which includes many Churches, this is most likely a selection from Cultra Sandstone, cedar/ Irish oak and a contrast material of marine grade stainless steel. This reflects Northern Ireland tourism's 'authentic' brand value.

Other materials such as coloured acrylic and enamelled/powder coated steel will be needed to create graphic areas and interest. This reflects Northern Ireland tourism's 'forward thinking' brand value.

Please Note: All materials need appropriate sourcing, prototyping and testing to ensure quality of finish, durability and consistency.



SANDSTONE



CEDAR/IRISH OAK - WEATHERED



MARINE GRADE STAINLESS STEEL

Colours

Where possible choose colours that have an affinity with the site.

The accent colour that is most appropriate for the Saint Patrick's Trail is a bright, contemporary green, Pantone ref 376.

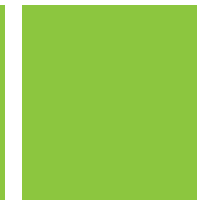
It is inseparable with the mainstream associations with Saint Patrick and will not only act as a high contrast colour on the system but provide a way to connect all signs of differing formats across the route.



PANTONE 376



C: 59 M: 0 Y: 100 K: 0



R: 117 G: 192 B: 68

PLEASE NOTE: There will be slight variations as your chosen colour is produced across different materials and finishes. Specifying a Pantone colour for your suppliers to use or match is the easiest way to maintain colour consistency across all formats.

Typography and point size – Getting your message across

As part of our new brand, NITB use a specially commissioned typeface called 'Northern Ireland'.

The typeface is confident and authentic and reflective of the Northern Ireland tourism brand. It is easy to read and we would recommend you use it on all appropriate interpretation.

To access the typeface, email brand@nitb.com

It is also incredibly important to remember that people view interpretation from a distance and we would suggest the following guideline minimum point sizes:

- Headline: 72 point
- Sub heading: 60 point
- Introduction: 32 point
- Text, captions etc: 24 point

(Please note that point sizes can and should be adjusted according to the individual sign format).

Fresh. Playful. Proud.

abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

NORTHERN IRELAND TYPEFACE SAMPLE

Images

We know that an image is said to be worth 1,000 words and good images or visuals can make all the difference between a story being well told or not.

The visual should illustrate something that the visitor can't see for themselves eg. there is no benefit in including a visual of a landmark when the visitor can simply look out to sea to appreciate the sight for themselves.

Visuals or photographs cannot stand alone. They must be captioned: there is nothing as frustrating as a half told story.

Captions should include information on:

- What the photograph depicts
- Where the photograph was taken
- When it was taken
- Who the photographer was or image ownership



FOR EXAMPLE:
PICNIC AT NENDRUM MONASTERY / COMBER, NEWTOWNARDS / MAY 2004 / IMAGE SUPPLIED
COURTESY OF NITB

Don't forget the map

Many places have adopted the approach of enhancing the familiar. Regular maps are given extra information in the form of '3-dimensional' illustrations of key buildings, features and points of interest that allow the user to use the built environment or landscape to navigate. By using a system that is widely adopted, more visitors will be familiar and more comfortable with it.



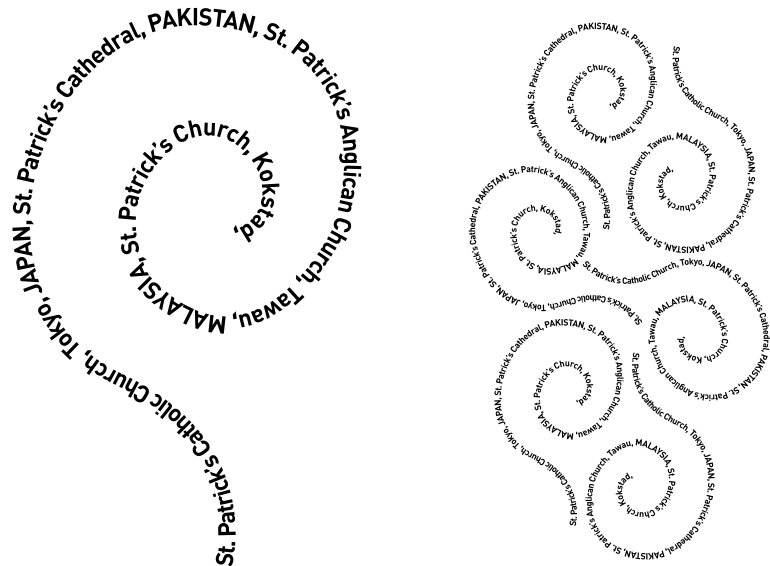
CITY MAP EXAMPLES: LONDON & BELFAST

Engagement/ interactive strategy

It is important to engage with your visitors and encourage them to interact with the interpretation and the sites.

For the Saint Patrick's Trail we have devised an engagement strategy based on a Bible verse from Matthew chapter 7, verse 7 'Seek & ye shall find'.

This is something that will be further detailed in updates of these guidelines.



Public Realm and Public Art

Remember that interpretation doesn't stop at panels. Engage with visitors at every opportunity. Sculptures, street furniture, benches, bins, street lamps, railings are all perfect mediums from which to tell stories.

Irrespective of the medium, the same rules apply:

- The shape form should be reflective of the place
- The materials should be reflective of the place

- The colours should be reflective of the place
- The font should be right. The point size appropriate. Plain English must be used
- Images should be appropriate and must be captioned
- Public realm should not be considered in isolation and should be part of any engagement device
- Public art must be interpreted to tell the visitor about the detail and what the art is expressing. A simple plaque can suffice

Bring your story to life

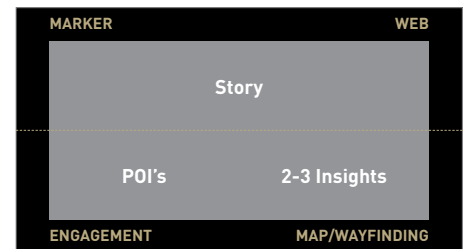
Don't forget that our people are our greatest assets. They are Northern Ireland's best story tellers. If possible bring your story to life through re-enactments or story-telling events.

Applying our thinking to the Saint Patrick's Trail

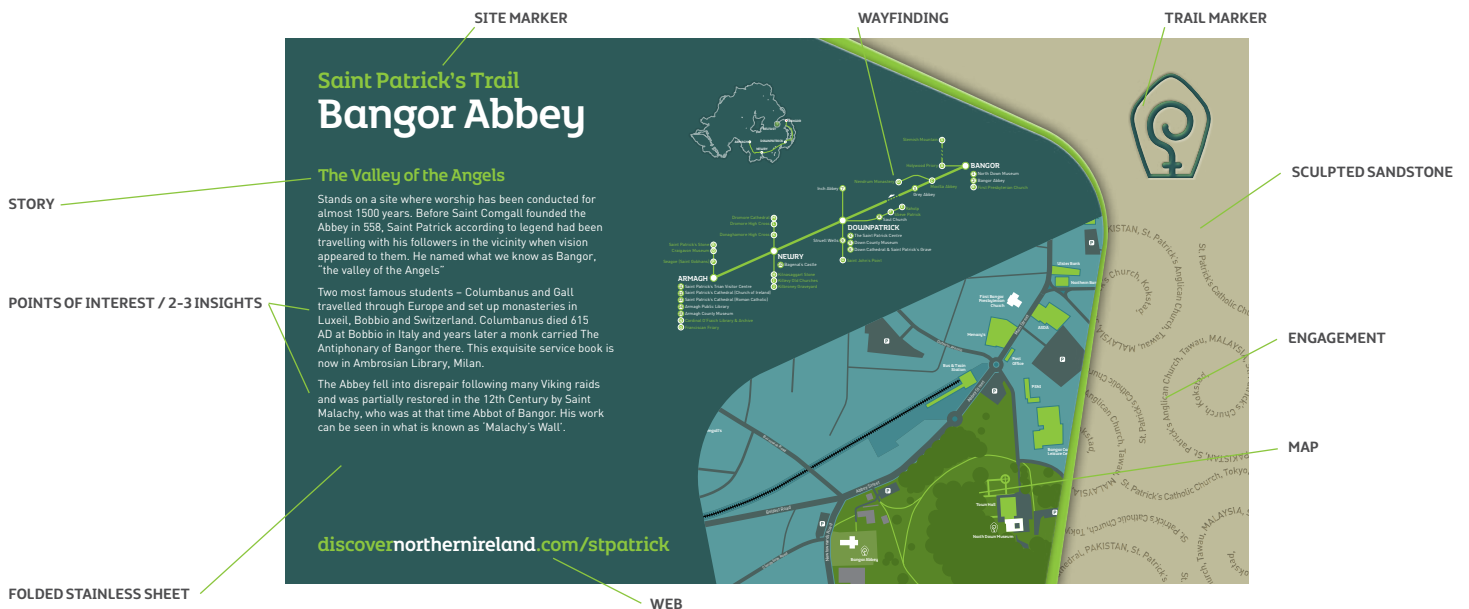
Interpretation needs to be sensitive to the site.

At the core of the interpretation should be your story, taking a lead from one of the key themes of life, legend and landscape. Following this you can highlight 2-3 insights to meet the remaining themes.

It will also enrich the visitor experience to feature other local points of interest. The level of information included will differ depending on the format of your sign. The suggested minimum content for each interpretation should be: a trail marker; map or wayfinding putting the site in context of the trail; appropriate engagement/interactive element; and web address letting your visitor know where to find out more.



SUGGESTED CONTENT HIERARCHY



This example of a wall mounted sign was selected from our menu of formats. It is designed to be placed at the site entrance ensuring that the visitor knows they have arrived at the next point on the trail.

Causeway Coastal Route

The thinking behind the approach

The Causeway Coastal Route has been established as one of Northern Ireland's strategic tourist routes. The route spans 2 cities, 9 Glens, 3 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, Northern Ireland's only inhabited island and of course the jewel in the crown that is the Giant's Causeway World Heritage Site.

While primarily coastal based, the Causeway Coastal Route extends into rural landscapes and comprises a great many sites, views and attractions: reflecting the region's vast array of unique environments and stories. However, the greatest asset is the world famous Giant's Causeway which welcomes some 750,000 visitors annually.

In thinking creatively about connecting the many sites along the route, we believe it

is essential to be direct and literal in order that 'unfamiliar' visitors can quickly and easily identify a site as being part of the trail. We recommend that all sites leverage the power of the Giant's Causeway and demonstrate how they relate to it.

To that end we would suggest the following as a guide to interpretative signage along the Causeway Coastal Route.



VISUALS REPRESENTING VARIOUS SIGNAGE FORMATS

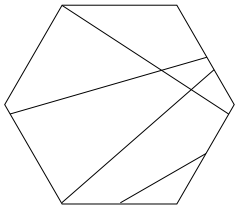
3D Forms & format ideas

Hexagonal basalt stones are a synonymous icon of the Giant's Causeway.

Our range of signs will take their overall design form from abstractions of these extruded hexagonal shapes. Different 'cuts' or 'slices' of the shapes will give us a palette of formats to cover the range of signs required in such a system (see examples 1 & 2).

We would envisage a base range of around 12 sign formats to cope with the environments found along the Causeway Coastal Route. This ranges from finger posts to totems, see sketches below.

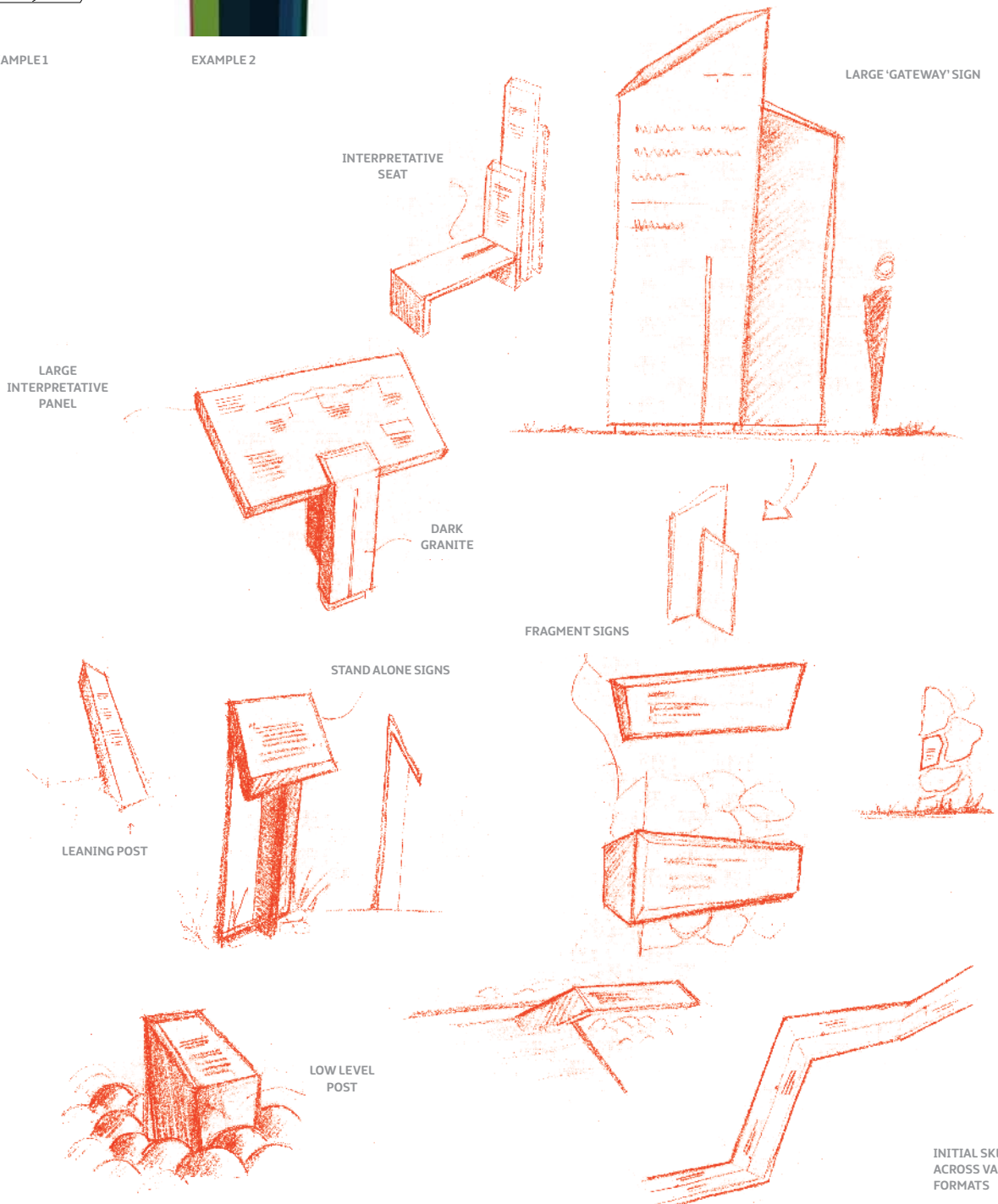
Please Note: This range is indicative only. Further designs based on the same principles could and should be developed that are bespoke to the individual needs of a particular site.



EXAMPLE 1



EXAMPLE 2



INITIAL SKETCHES ACROSS VARIOUS FORMATS

Materials

Where possible choose materials that have an affinity with the site.

For example, if possible we would suggest the use of Basalt, marine grade stainless steel and silvered cedar/Irish oak. This reflects Northern Ireland tourism's 'authentic' brand value.

Other materials such as coloured acrylic and enamelled/powder coated steel will be needed to create graphic areas and interest and reflect Northern Ireland tourism's 'forward thinking' brand value.

Please Note: All materials need appropriate sourcing, prototyping and testing to ensure quality of finish, durability and consistency.



BASALT



CEDAR/IRISH OAK - WEATHERED



MARINE GRADE STAINLESS STEEL

Colours

Where possible choose colours that have an affinity with the site.

The accent colour that is most appropriate for the Causeway Coastal Route is a hot/lava red (Pantone ref 485C). It connects with the origins of the landscape and will not only act as a high contrast colour on the system but provide a way to connect all signs of differing formats across the route.



PANTONE 485



C: 0 M: 96 Y: 100 K: 0



R: 238 G: 46 B: 36

PLEASE NOTE: There will be slight variations as your chosen colour is produced across different materials and finishes. Specifying a Pantone colour for your suppliers to use or match is the easiest way to maintain colour consistency across all formats.

Typography and point size – Getting your message across

As part of our new brand, NITB use a specially commissioned typeface called 'Northern Ireland'.

The typeface is confident and authentic and reflective of the Northern Ireland tourism brand. It is easy to read and we would recommend you use it on all appropriate interpretation.

To access the typeface, email brand@nitb.com

It is also incredibly important to remember that people view interpretation from a distance and we would suggest the following guideline minimum point sizes:

- Headline: 72 point
- Sub heading: 60 point
- Introduction: 32 point
- Text, captions etc: 24 point

(Please note that point sizes can and should be adjusted according to the individual sign format).

Fresh. Playful. Proud.

abcdefghijklmn
opqrstuvwxyz
0123456789

NORTHERN IRELAND TYPEFACE SAMPLE

Images

We know that an image is said to be worth 1,000 words and good images or visuals can make all the difference between a story being well told or not.

The visual should illustrate something that the visitor can't see for themselves eg. there is no benefit in including a visual of a landmark when the visitor can simply look out to sea to appreciate the sight for themselves.

Visuals or photographs cannot stand alone. They must be captioned: there is nothing as frustrating as a half told story.

Captions should include information on:

- What the photograph depicts
- Where the photograph was taken
- When it was taken
- Who the photographer was or image ownership



FOR EXAMPLE:
AERIAL VIEW OF CARRICK-A-REDE / BALLINTOY, BALLYCASTLE / AUGUST 1993 / IMAGE SUPPLIED COURTESY OF NITB

Don't forget the map

Many places have adopted the approach of enhancing the familiar. Regular maps are given extra information in the form of '3-dimensional' illustrations of key buildings, features and points of interest that allow the user to use the built environment or landscape to navigate. By using a system that is widely adopted, more visitors will be familiar and more comfortable with it.



CITY MAP EXAMPLES: LONDON & BELFAST

Engagement/ interactive strategy

It is important to engage with your visitors and encourage them to interact with the interpretation and the sites.

This is something that will have to be considered for this trail and will be further detailed in updates of these guidelines.

Public Realm and Public Art

Remember that interpretation doesn't stop at panels. Engage with visitors at every opportunity. Sculptures, street furniture, benches, bins, street lamps, railings are all perfect mediums from which to tell stories.

Irrespective of the medium, the same rules apply:

- The shape form should be reflective of the place
- The materials should be reflective of the place
- The colours should be reflective of the place
- The font should be right. The point size appropriate. Plain English must be used
- Images should be appropriate and must be captioned
- Public realm should not be considered in isolation and should be part of any engagement device
- Public art must be interpreted to tell the visitor about the detail and what the art is expressing. A simple plaque can suffice.



EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC ART - 'SOURCE' AT MOUNTSANDEL, COLERAINE; MATERIALS USED INCLUDE CORTEN STEEL AND BRONZE

THE INTERPRETATION CELEBRATES 10,000 YEARS OF HUMAN SETTLEMENT IN IRELAND STARTING AT MOUNTSANDEL. THE BRONZE BANDS REPRESENT THE HUMAN HAND AND ITS INDUSTRIAL INTERACTION IN THE LANDSCAPE.

Bring your story to life

Don't forget that our people are our greatest assets. They are Northern Ireland's best story tellers. If possible bring your story to life through re-enactments or story-telling events.

Applying our thinking to the Causeway Coastal Route

Please refer to this section within Saint Patrick's Trail for an example of best practice.

Mournes Coastal Route

The thinking behind the approach

The Mournes Coastal Route is a 42 mile coastal route through the Mournes Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (from Clough to Narrow Water) incorporating 23 sites and 4 driving loops passing through areas of interest such as the Silent Valley.

This route reflects a great many unique environments with individual stories to tell. The landscape itself is the hero of the story.

It is important that the many sites along the route are connected with an holistic approach so that 'unfamiliar' visitors can quickly and easily identify a site as being part of the trail.

To that end we would suggest the following as a guide to interpretive signage along the Mournes Coastal Route.



VISUALS REPRESENTING VARIOUS SIGNAGE FORMATS

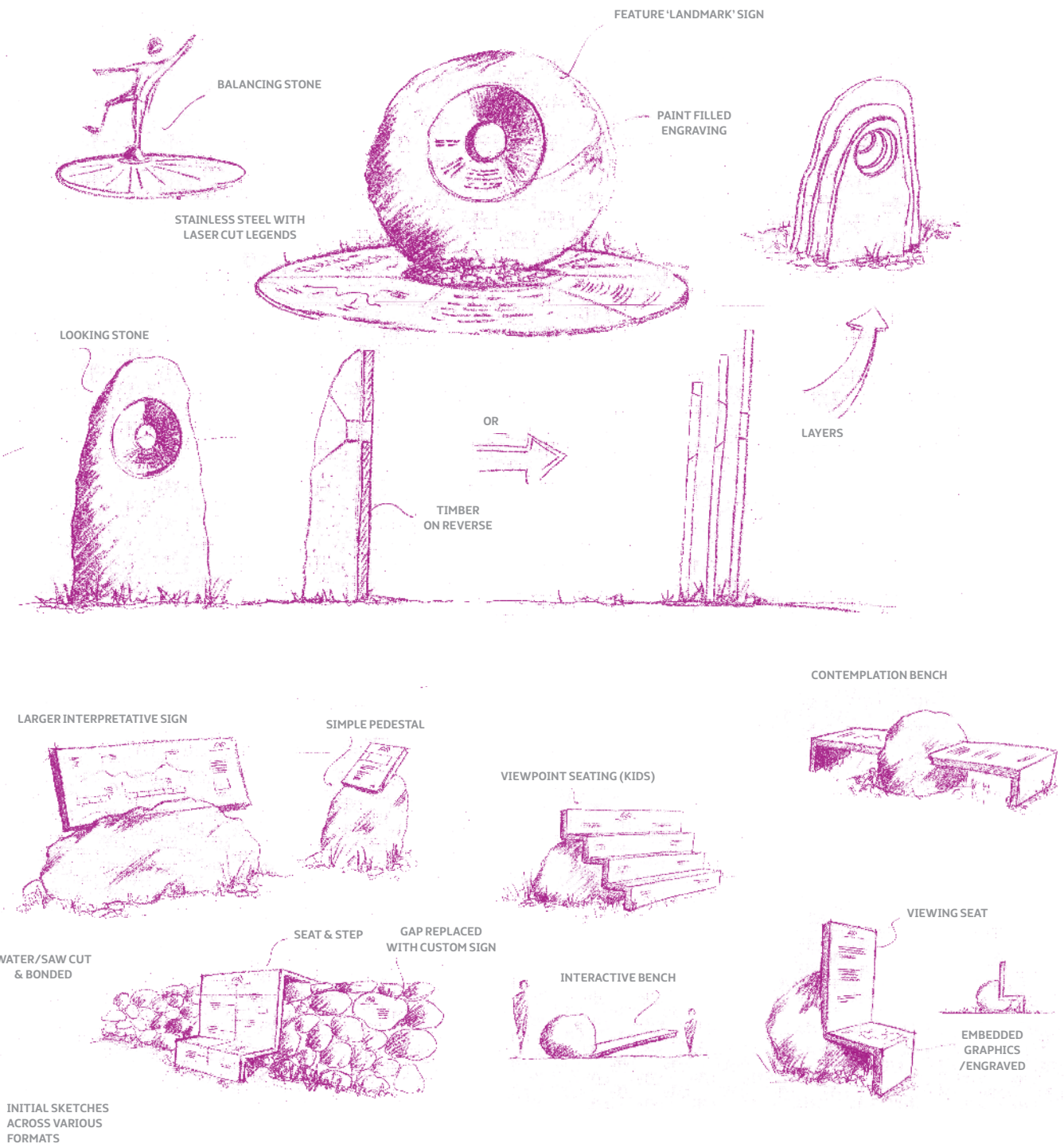
3D Forms & format ideas

The most logical creative inspiration for the Mournes has to come from the Mournes themselves and in particular the interaction between man and the landscape i.e. how granite has been used to provide shelter.

This interaction should provide us with a wealth of opportunities to engage with visitors by creating a system whereby man made comes together with nature to create simple useful objects that also provide an interpretive function.

Again we would envisage a base range of around 12 sign formats to cope with the environments found along the Mournes Coastal Route ranging from finger posts to totems to benches, see sketches below.

Please Note: This range is indicative only. Further designs based on the same principles could and should be developed that are bespoke to the individual needs of a particular site.



Materials

Where possible choose materials that have an affinity with the site.

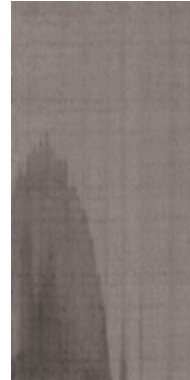
We would suggest an interaction of cedar/Irish oak with Mourne granite with a contrast material of marine grade stainless steel. This reflects Northern Ireland tourism's 'authentic' brand value.

Other materials such as coloured acrylic and enamelled/powder coated steel will be needed to create graphic areas and interest. This reflects Northern Ireland tourism's 'forward thinking' brand value.

Please Note: All materials need appropriate sourcing, prototyping and testing to ensure quality of finish, durability and consistency.



MOURNE GRANITE



CEDAR/IRISH OAK - WEATHERED



MARINE GRADE STAINLESS STEEL

Colours

Where possible choose colours that have an affinity with the site.

The accent colour that is most appropriate for The Mournes Coastal Route is a bright, contemporary purple, Pantone 2415. The colour represents the blooming mountainside heather and will not only act as a high contrast colour on the system but provide a way to connect all signs of differing formats across the route.



PANTONE 2415



C: 40 M: 100 Y: 0 K: 7



R: 152 G: 29 B: 133

PLEASE NOTE: There will be slight variations as your chosen colour is produced across different materials and finishes. Specifying a Pantone colour for your suppliers to use or match is the easiest way to maintain colour consistency across all formats.

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Captions should include information on:

- What the photograph depicts
- Where the photograph was taken
- When it was taken
- Who the photographer was or image ownership



FOR EXAMPLE:
WALKING AT SLIEVE BINNIAN / ANNALONG, NEWRY / OCTOBER 2001 / IMAGE SUPPLIED
COURTESY OF NITB

Don't forget the map

Many places have adopted the approach of enhancing the familiar. Regular maps are given extra information in the form of '3-dimensional' illustrations of key buildings, features and points of interest that allow the user to use the built environment or landscape to navigate. By using a system that is widely adopted, more visitors will be familiar and more comfortable with it.



CITY MAP EXAMPLES: LONDON & BELFAST

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EXAMPLE OF PUBLIC ART - 'GLOBAL JOURNEYS' ON THE PROMENADE, NEWCASTLE, CO. DOWN
MATERIALS USED INCLUDE MIRROR POLISHED STAINLESS STEEL AND BRONZE.

THE SCULPTURE REFLECTS THE SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT OF THE MOURNE MOUNTAINS, THE SEA AND THE SKY.

Bring your story to life

Don't forget that our people are our greatest assets. They are Northern Ireland's best story tellers. If possible bring your story to life through re-enactments or story-telling events.

Applying our thinking to the Mournes Coastal Route

Please refer to this section within Saint Patrick's Trail for an example of best practice.

Technical Guidance

For the most part interpretive signage is self sufficient, but it will require some level of maintenance.

Consider an annual maintenance programme and who will have responsibility for this.

How will the site be maintained?

Clearing vegetation

Many of the sites along these three trails have stunning scenery that we want to encourage the visitor to enjoy. It is important to remember to clear any vegetation obstructing the views we are referring to. Another factor to consider is overhanging branches, particularly if there are birds nearby as fouling will have an adverse effect on the appearance of the sign.

Vandalism

Any outdoor structure may be subject to vandalism. Due to the nature of the sites it is impossible to provide 24 hour security. Be vigilant and check the sites regularly for signs of vandalism.

The proposed system encourages using robust materials that will be resistant to most forms of vandalism but as we all know it is difficult to produce something completely vandal proof.

Erosion/corrosion

As many of the sites are along coastal routes, or sites that will be exposed to the elements. It is important to consider the effect that this will have on your materials. We have suggested materials that will age sensitively and enhance the look and feel of the interpretation.

Thermal expansion and contraction

Again this will affect final material decisions, more specifically when it comes to the stone. It would be beneficial to steer away from sedimentary stones as they are more prone to this form of erosion.

Do I have the right to use the information on my interpretation?

Copyright of material

Ensure that you check the copyright of material before it is reproduced. This may affect images, maps or quotes. Remember to acknowledge/thank any other organisations or groups involved.

Licence requirements for reproducing maps

If reproducing maps on your signage, check licensing requirements. Remember the maps will be there indefinitely so a one off bulk payment or long term licensing agreement would be preferable. Another alternative would be to have bespoke maps created, this way you have ownership of them.

Also when using maps decide if you wish to include a scale, north sign and if you wish to highlight any facilities such as toilets.

Have I considered the requirements of the visitor?

Disability and Discrimination Act

Does your interpretation comply with the Disability and Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005 guidelines? Details can be found at the below link.

http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/RightsAndObligations/DisabilityRights/DG_4001068

Remember to consider the accessibility of your site. Can it be accessed by people of all ages and abilities? This may be a deciding factor in choosing the final location for your interpretation.

Planning permission

Does your site require planning permission? If so, remember to build this in to your critical paths, timelines and cost.

Public liability insurance

Will your interpretation be covered by public liability insurance and who is responsible for securing this?

RNIB and BSI guidelines

The Royal National Institute for the Blind and the British Standards Institute have set recommended guidelines regarding accessibility. The key points from these guidelines are:

- Sign content should be short and easily understood
- Text should be in a clear uncomplicated font
- Where appropriate signs should have tactile embossed text, pictograms and arrows together with Braille
- Signs should be located at key decision points on all routes
- Signs should not be located where the glare of light reduces legibility
- The sign background should be non-reflective and in a matt finish
- All signs should contrast visually with their background
- Signs should have easily distinguishable symbols to locate areas and include instructions for blind and partially sighted to enable points of interest

- The use of upper and lower case text should be used in preference to upper case only
- All text should be aligned to the left
- Arrows should be located on the side of the sign to which they are pointing i.e. arrows pointing left should be located on the left side of the sign and arrows pointing right on the right hand side

How well do I really know the site?

There are a number of requirements that will affect your interpretation, and more specifically its exact location. Ensure that you have considered the following factors;

- Planning permission
- Ground surface conditions
- Foundation requirements
- Impact of direct sunlight

Further information and reading

Carter, J

A Sense of Place: an interpretive planning handbook

Tourism and Environment Initiative, Inverness, 1997

Ham, S

Environmental Interpretation: A Practical Guide for People with Big Ideas and Small Budgets

North American Press, 1992; ISBN 1555919022

Tilden, F

Interpreting our Heritage

University of North Carolina, 1977; ISBN 0807840165

Veverka, J. A.

Interpretive Master Planning

Falcon Press, 1994; ISBN 1560442743

Centre for Environmental Interpretation;

A Way With Words, Environmental Interpretation Bulletin

Centre for Environmental Interpretation, 1993

Elbow, P.

Writing Without Teachers and Writing With Style

Oxford University Press, undated

Gross, M. Zehr, J and Zimmerman, R.

Signs, Trails and Wayside Exhibits, Interpreter's Handbook Series;

UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc, 1994

Gross, M. Trapp, S and Zimmerman, R.

Creating Environmental Publications, Interpreter's Handbook Series.

UW-SP Foundation Press, Inc, 1994

McManus, P, M.

Oh Yes They Do: How Museum Visitors Read Labels and Interact With Exhibit Texts

Curator, 1989

Scott, D, H.

Secrets of Successful Writing.

Reference Software, 1989

Veverka, J.

Interpretive Master Planning,

Falcon Press Publishing Co. Inc., 1994