



INTERPRETATION ALONG THE GREAT GLEN – SOME HELPFUL HINTS

A bit of background

You'll have received this sheet because you have an interest in installing some kind of interpretation within the Great Glen. You could be thinking of a way-marked trail, an interpretive panel, an orientation panel or a simple signpost pointing out a place or feature. These are all things which help communicate the stories and adventures of the Great Glen to users of the three Great Glen Ways, whether they come by boat, by boat or by bike!

In 1995 a study was undertaken to look at interpretation that would establish a clear identity for the Great Glen. This was taken further still in 2000 when a series of standard designs was created for use on interpretive structures throughout the Glen. The logo you see at the top of this sheet is part of this design scheme. This logo can only be used by Great Glen Ways Initiative partners (British Waterways Scotland, Forestry Commission Scotland, Highland Council and Scottish Natural Heritage). **All other designs, including those for interpretive structures, are available for reuse by communities and individuals living along the Great Glen and some examples can be seen in the Project Design section at http://www.greatglenway.com/ways_design.htm**

FAQs:

Q: *Does it cost anything to reuse a GGWI design?*

A: No. You'll have to pay to have your structure made of course, but the design is available free of charge.

Q: *Do I have to use these existing designs for interpretation in the Great Glen?*

A: There's no obligation to do so, but good interpretive design is expensive. Amateur way markers, signs and panels can look a bit shoddy alongside professional interpretation. If you do choose to use the designs it's a way of adding a professional touch to your project – but without it adding to your costs. These designs have already been put through consultation the length and breadth of the Great Glen so local communities have helped shape the way the structures look.

Do remember to check with the landowner for appropriate permissions.

Q: *But won't it look dull to use a standard design?*

A: What we are suggesting here is just a standard approach for all Great Glen interpretive **structures**. The logo, arrow or panel you place on this structure can then be as individual as you like, and you can make variations in colour or materials if you wish. But we think it is better, for visitors especially, if all the structures have a basic recognisable Great Glen identity. It helps give everyone a greater awareness of the Glen's sense of place.

Q: *How do I go about planning the actual panel?*

A: If you're happy to go it alone, Scottish Natural Heritage provide some excellent easy-to-follow guidelines at <http://www.snh.org.uk/wwo/interpretation/default.html>

Alternatively, you can work with an interpretive planner (see listings on <http://www.heritageinterpretation.org.uk/directory.html> if you need help).

Q: *If I do write the panel myself, where do I start?*

A: Before you start writing, think through the following points:

a. Is your panel there just to tell stories (interpretation) or to help people find their way around (information and orientation). Will you need a map?

b. Why do you want to have a panel at all? For example, do you want people to change the way they think or behave? Do you want them to learn or talk about something? Do you want them to have an emotional response to a story?

c. Who do you think your main audience is? Try to write for them, not for yourself or your committee!

d. What are your themes going to be? Consider not just what topics you wish to cover. Try to write out your theme as a whole sentence, e.g.:

Theme: "We want people to understand that Cherry Island is a crannog, a clever form of early defensive dwelling which consisted of a wooden hut built on piles in the loch."

Topics: crannogs, early peoples, defensive homes, lochs, construction methods

You don't have to include your theme in your panel as written, just use it to check that what you have ended up writing does communicate what you say in your theme.

Q: *What about laying out my panel?*

A: Once you start writing, decide that:

a. your text length will not exceed approximately 200 words – possibly fewer for an orientation panel. Tell as much of your story in pictures as you can: they do not require translation and communicate more than words alone.

b. you will have several large, fine images on your panel rather than many more small ones.

c. you will get someone else unfamiliar with the site to read and comment on your panel before you finalise it.

d. you will put the date of manufacture and an organisation contact number in small print somewhere on the panel: at some stage every panel requires replacement/repair and you may not be the person doing it!

Q: *How do I find someone to manufacture a panel for me and what should it be made of?*

A: Look for a specialist interpretive panel manufacturer. The yellow pages aren't much help! Ask for local recommendations or try listings on <http://www.heritageinterpretation.org.uk/directory.html>.

The Great Glen Ways panels installed during early 2008 have been manufactured in a tough polycarbonate. Most panel production processes no longer use paper or lamination, applying colour direct to a panel for a longer lasting finish.

You should ask for guarantees against fading and other deterioration (e.g. poor sealing) within the first three to five years, depending on the exposure of your site.

Q: *Who should I contact if I decide that I would like to use the Great Glen Ways designs?*

A: Contact the Great Glen Way Rangers Office: Auchterawe, Fort Augustus, PH32 4BT.

Tel: 01320 366633 Email: greatglenway@highland.gov.uk

We hope this has helped – good luck with your interpretive project.

The Great Glen Ways team.