

Let's all share

Julie Forrest describes the long running training programme supported by Scottish Natural Heritage.

Many of you will have attended or at least heard about Scottish Natural Heritage's Sharing Good Practice programme.

What you may not know is that the programme began way back in 1993 under the banner of Getting to Grips with Learning . Each year international speakers like Joseph Cornell, Steve Van Matre and John Veverka, together with a range of home grown talent, including Gordon MacLellan and James Carter, were given a platform to inspire and enthuse a new generation of interpreters and environmental educators.

The interpretation training events initially focussed on getting the basics right – planning, writing and media selection – and were targeted at both SNH staff and individuals from partner agencies. The simple aim was to get more people interested in interpretation and help them to feel more confident about what interpretation was and how to use this communication tool effectively.

Topics included Tackling Vandalism, Visitor Management Planning, Environmental Art, New Technology, Exhibition Design, Visitor Centres and Visitor Attractions, to name just a few.

Moving away from training

By the late 1990s, under the title of Sharing Good Practice (SGP), the focus of events shifted away from the role of the recognised expert in favour of bringing together a group of practitioners with varying levels of experience to share ideas and approaches on a topic relevant to their work. These events feature case studies and the learning is enhanced by the use of a wide range of resource materials. The SGP approach is now used on a much wider range of subjects and issues, for example, Working With Rivers, Renewable Energy, Biodiversity at the Chalk Face. Wherever possible interpretation techniques are integrated into the development and delivery of these events or materials so helping to improve awareness of what interpretation has to offer to different audiences.

Maintaining Momentum

With the formation of Interpret Scotland in 1998, the planning and organising of interpretation events within the SGP programme became a more collaborative process, reflecting our collective view on what issues required attention. In my opinion the future needs of a new generation of interpreters rely on Interpret Scotland members continuing to work together to provide high quality workshops that encourage participation and the sharing of good ideas.

Lorna Brown has been at the helm of SNH's SGP programme from the outset. Lorna has been a consistent and enthusiastic ambassador for promoting the use of interpretation to a wide range of audiences; she was also responsible for overseeing the production of the IS journal for many years. Lorna retires in May, and we would like to say a big 'thank you' from Interpret Scotland for all the hard work she has done behind the scenes. Best wishes for your retirement!

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