

## Something to shout about

This issue coincides with The Vital Spark, the international conference on interpretation that is running as part of the Highland Year of Culture. It seemed a good opportunity to look at interpretation in Scotland in general, rather than concentrating on a single theme.

The conference aims to bring people together to share experiences and build networks, and to discuss issues of good practice: you'll find a similar mix in the articles in the magazine. But in planning the conference, there was also a strong sense of wanting to share something of Scotland's inspiring landscape and culture, and the passion that has gone into its interpretation.

So we've chosen some showcase projects for this magazine – the ones with a frame around the title – that have pushed boundaries, tried new things, or simply stayed true to interpretation's roots of enlightening and intriguing visitors.

Not all interpretation in Scotland 'works', or is of a uniformly high standard. It's as compromised by political caution, budget constraints, and ideas that don't quite make it as anywhere else. It was harder than we'd expected to find our showcase projects, and some of them are now several years old. But they all seem to have a couple of things in common: a creative vision for what interpretation can achieve, and a willingness to take risks. The future of really good interpretation depends on organisations having the courage to adopt those two principles, and on them embracing interpretation as a central part of their culture, from staff 'on the ground' to the most senior managers.

*James Carter, editor and member of The Vital Spark steering group*