

After the spark

Kit Reid looks forward

The Vital Spark marks a real watershed for the interpretation profession in Scotland. It has seen Interpret Scotland (IS) and the Association for Heritage Interpretation (AHI) working closely together towards a common goal through a joint steering group. But what happens afterwards?

To be honest I am rather excited about it. Over the years we have heard from professional interpreters and those for whom interpretation is part of their remit about what they want from interpretation organisations – to meet other interpreters, to know what is going on in Scotland and further afield, to work out opportunities for partnership, to find guidance, training opportunities and new inspiration, and to talk shop.

Next year marks ten years since the Lonie Report was published. This landmark report examined the state of interpretation in Scotland and gave pointers to carry the discipline into the twenty-first century. I would suggest that after the Vital Spark, the time will be ripe to fully review the main interpretive issues in Scotland, in particular the relationships between Interpret Scotland, the Association for Heritage Interpretation and the Scottish Interpretation Network (SIN - an informal networking body, which is sadly almost defunct).

Many of the questions have been raised before but in my opinion we have still not found the right solution. We need clearer relationships between the different bodies, and there is a serious question to be answered over whether SIN can continue to exist. I would also hope that closer links between academia, agencies and consultancies can be encouraged, as well as opportunities for the three areas to promote good practice within the discipline.

All these are exciting questions for the year ahead. I hope the Vital Spark will create a renewed flame of enthusiasm for where we go from here.

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A great flame follows a little spark
Dante