

MyPeak *Bill Bevan goes networking*

My Peak Experience is a user-generated website where people can contribute their own comments, pictures, videos and audio clips of their experiences of the Peak District's heritage. The website was created by the Peak District Interpretation Partnership as part of the Peak Experience project, and on the back of my own interest in Web 2.0 and social networking websites. The site was launched in May 2008 after a long gestation and testing period.



We developed the website by looking at other social networking and content sharing sites such as YouTube, Flickr, Facebook and MySpace to identify how they worked, what their appeal was and how they encouraged use. We then commissioned web company **Surface Impression** who have experience of creating websites based on user-generated content. An important consideration was that MyPeak should not look like a corporate-owned website but should appeal as a place where an online community can grow.

The aims of MyPeak are to:

- Develop a stronger sense of connection and 'ownership' of the Peak District amongst visitors and local residents who become part of a virtual Peak online community. We hope this will lead to a greater understanding and further return visits.
- Enable others to participate in interpreting the Peak District. By 'others' we mean people who are not employed as Rangers, Wardens, Interpreters or Guides. They might be visitors who want to share their favourite place, or folk from local communities who want to publicise their area. Many people have their own favourite places and their own stories to tell, are good photographers and innovative mini-video makers. Let us harness this enthusiasm for a landscape.
- Encourage others to widen the number of information sources available to the millions of web users who regularly use the web for destination research, content-sharing and social networking



The site works by having a page for a place in the same way that **Facebook** has a page for a person. Any member can create a new place, which they then have administrative responsibility for. Once the place exists any other members can contribute photos, videos and audio, while anyone can add a comment.

Some essentials in setting up the site were:

- people have to join as members before they can upload content
- members have to agree to a set of terms and conditions and a set of do's and don'ts
- any submitted content is published immediately it is uploaded
- content is peer moderated through a 'report this page' function.

All of these elements have been borrowed from other long-standing and successful Web 2.0 sites. We also wanted to make the



Grindstones by earthwatcher
www.flickr.com/photos/earthwatcher

most of 'mash-ups'. These are web-based applications that enable content from one website to be shared with another.

On MyPeak, this works by allowing members with photos on Flickr or videos on YouTube to link them easily into the MyPeakExperience site. It also allows MyPeak places to link outwards, to applications such as Google Earth and digital maps. Members' favourite places can link out to social networking site Facebook and an interactive map application can go to any member's website, blog or profile page.

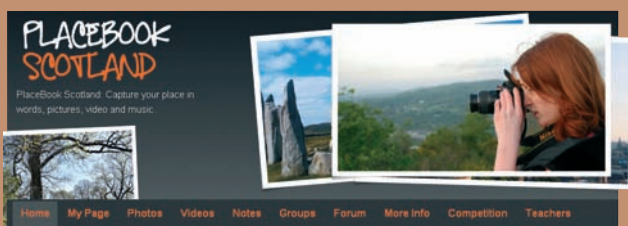
Since May 2008 the website has grown steadily. We seeded it with 50 places to

begin with, both to give an idea of how the site works and to have some places for people to add content to. There are now 67 places and a membership of 89. We are publicising the site through press releases, postcards, posters and by direct promotion through other online communities including special interest forums, Flickr groups, Facebook and blogs. This last form of promotion has been the most successful to date, because we are directly reaching other users of Web 2.0 sites.

MyPeak is growing like a molehill rather than erupting like a volcano. We think this slow-burner effect is inevitable because

this sort of site grows organically as more and more people get to know about it. We see two main audiences for the site: one is people who use the internet to research a place when planning a visit, and who might just browse the site for information and interest. But our target audience for membership is people who already actively participate in social networking and user-generated websites. This is a growing audience, as more and more people grow up using this technology!

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Placebook Scotland

Scotland is about to get its own version of the My Peak Experience site. **PlaceBook Scotland** went live for uploads on 5 November. This exciting new project aims to enthuse people and to capture the essence of Scotland's distinct places and diverse landscapes – the good, bad, and even the ugly – as perceived by local people.

Everyone is invited to submit images, prose, poetry, music or song that evokes the

essence of the places they have strong associations with. Places where people live, work or visit, urban and rural, dramatic and ordinary, the site will become a record of what we think and feel about Scotland's places.

Supported by the Scottish Government, Scottish Natural Heritage and National Trust for Scotland, PlaceBook Scotland seeks to capture people's views in creative ways and generate interest and

discussion about the sense of place in their local areas.

The project is an initiative of the **Scottish Landscape Forum**, which exists to share information, encourage discussion and promote action for better care of Scotland's landscapes.