

## Delivery

Once the brief is confirmed, the interpretive designers have been appointed and the contract is in place, the project can begin. What happens next?

Let's take as an example a hypothetical interpretive trail. The brief is to produce a map-based panel at the start of the trail and two further panels en route.

The starting point is to clarify with the client any remaining design, content and technical issues. These may have been resolved in the brief or the designer's proposals, but as often as not they only receive the focussed attention needed when the contract begins.

In this hypothetical case, outstanding issues might include confirming the exact location of the panels, which will affect the orientation and perspective of the map and other illustrations. The panels' location and orientation may also have technical implications in terms of ground conditions, being vulnerable to vandalism, excessive UV bleaching (i.e. if they are to be south facing) or to corroding tree sap from overhanging branches. Planning consent may be required (who will sort this?).

The map format may also need to be clarified. Will it be a vertical plan or an oblique '3D' view? The latter are more attractive and easier to understand, but are more complex and expensive to create. Visual references such as aerial photos and site plans will be needed (who will source these?) and will Ordnance Survey copyright permission be required?

Once outstanding issues such as these are resolved, the designers should then be allowed to do what they are trained to do: design. The role of the client should now be one of review and approval. Design by committee is never successful and always dilutes creativity.

## Design and production

The design and production stages for these hypothetical panels would typically be as follows:

- 1 The interpretive content is researched and possible images are identified for each panel. This is usually undertaken by the interpretive writer, a specialist member of the client or design team.
- 2 Technical specifications are agreed for the panels' material, frames and mounting.
- 3 Draft text is written and passed to the client. At this stage the client should comment on and agree the style, content, interpretive approach and accuracy .

Some of the text will be explicitly 'interpretive', whilst some will be geared towards visitor information and orientation. The map will need annotations or a key.

- 4 Specific illustrations and/or photographs are identified and agreed. As availability of site specific, good weather photos is often a problem, forward planning can avoid frustrating delays or the need to use inferior images. Those needed to specifically compliment the text are highlighted at the draft text stage and discussed with the client. If photo library images have to be used the costs can now be identified. Illustration briefs are agreed and colour palettes and illustration styles (e.g. watercolour, line, woodcut, computer generated) may also be confirmed. The need to include any logos on the panels is confirmed and responsibility for their sourcing agreed.
- 5 Design concepts are created and issued to the client for comment, showing the proposed design style and content. Following this a further concept visual may be required if substantial changes are made.
- 6 Pencil roughs of the map and other illustrations are produced and passed to the client for comment. These ensure technical accuracy before the final coloured illustrations are produced.
- 7 Finished illustrations and the final text are passed to the client for signing-off.
- 8 First artwork proofs are produced and passed to the client for approval. Staged payments may be part of the contract, and this can be a good point to trigger an invoice.
- 9 Comments on the first artwork proofs are received from the client and any changes are made to the design and text.
- 10 Finished artwork is passed to the client for signing-off. Any further client changes at this stage, beyond very minor amends, would usually be charged extra.
- 11 The approved artwork is sent to the panel manufacturers for printing and production. The production proofs - used to check colour balance - are countersigned by the client if necessary.
- 12 Printing and manufacturing is completed and the finished panels are delivered to the client, who installs them on site.
- 13 The contract is signed off and the final payment made.

As you can see, creating interpretation requires a lot of work - by both the client and designer. Trust, co-operation and a mutually understood process will lead to successful project completion.

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"A verbal contract isn't worth the paper it's written on."  
*Samuel Goldwyn (1882 - 1974), Goldwyn's Law of Contracts*