

Exhibitions

Exhibitions can really help to set your waterway up as a tourist destination. If you do not have a building you can use as an exhibition space then roadshows can be a great way to get the word out to a wider audience: touring exhibits need to be practical, durable and engaging.

Strengths

- Exhibitions are an opportunity to present the complete story.
- Comfortable surroundings for visitors to learn at their leisure.
- Existing visitor facilities can be used or a new built venue.
- Relatively cheap to produce and update
- The local community can be involved as face to face volunteers.
- It is possible to include interactive elements.

Weaknesses

- Requires a building or accommodation.
- Requires a management structure, staffing, cleaning etc.
- Ideally a business plan for long term viability should be produced.
- It can be time consuming to arrange venues, deliver and set up.
- A robust display is necessary.

Audience

- Exhibitions can appeal to a broad range of visitors.

Costings

- For rough guidance see page 11 of the HLF Interpretation document **Click here.**

Planning

- Decide who the audience is and what the purpose is of the exhibition. **Click here** to find out more.
- Where do you intend to visit with your touring exhibition? - Is there a demand? Schools, local fairs, boat festivals?
- If you are intending to host an exhibition on site, is the space you have in mind practical?
- Consider in your planning that permanent exhibitions need to be considered carefully, so it might be worth hiring in professional help.
- What form will your exhibition take - pull ups, A frames, posters?

Exhibitions

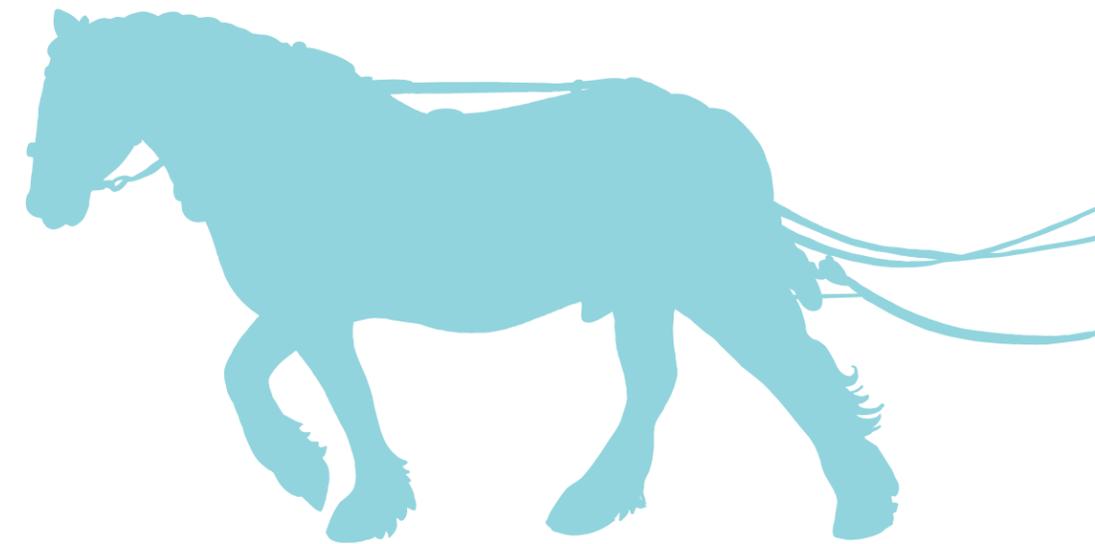


Exhibitions

Research

- Pull together what you already know and any useful documents.
- Primary sources can bring an exhibition to life, so can you track down: journals, photos, objects related to your waterway/local area.
- Consider carrying out oral history research which you can then showcase in your exhibit.
- Producing an exhibition is not about just presenting facts, you need to engage with the visitors. Consider using photos, objects, dressing up box, hands on activities?
- Supporting resources: As well as using your exhibit to interpret your waterway, you can also use the exhibit to market your waterway and organisation. Take leaflets for your trail along, or an up and coming open day so that people can come to you next time, or do something extra whilst they are on site.

Canal & River Trust are developing guidance for exhibitions which will be available in due course.



Stourport Exhibition

At Stourport Basins, visitors can explore two exhibition spaces telling the story of Stourport: the Tontine Stable and the Old Ticket Office. Volunteers were heavily involved in the restoration these spaces, doing much of the paint work and cleaning things like brasswork and leather harnesses in preparation for the exhibition.

A local Heritage Interpretation specialist was engaged to research and develop the exhibitions, establishing strong interpretive themes, illustrated with some great 'people stories'. Resources for the exhibition were gathered from many sources including The Civic Society, Bewdley Museum, English

Heritage and local people. It is recommended that you develop an acquisition policy so that you know what you are looking for, otherwise you might end up storing items you can't use. Stourport is a popular holiday destination for families - thinking about your audiences is a key part of the interpretation.

One of our objectives was to incorporate interactives, which would be low maintenance and would appeal to younger people. For example, a periscope was created so that children and visitors using wheelchairs could look out of a window and see an artist's impression of how the basins would have looked in the 1790s. The exhibition was split into themes, such as Canal Town (all about the growth of Stourport after arrival of the canal) and A Place to Work (talking about people's work in town). The challenge following the opening was to support a strong, well trained, volunteer team for the future. A strong relationship with the local press has been really important to us.

http://stourporttown.co.uk/?page_id=179



‘We wanted to tell the story of Stourport-on-Severn’s waterways’.

Eliza Botham
(Heritage Interpretation
Project Manager)