

Trails

Trails can be a nice way to show off points of interest on your waterway in a way that links them together. With this in mind it can be a great tool to tell the overall story.

Strengths

- Trails can be updated easily.
- Can be produced to suit all ages.
- Can introduce interactive elements.
- Trails encourage families to discover and learn together.

Weaknesses

- Need dry storage space.
- The written word is not accessible to all.
- Leaflets may cause a litter problem.
- Marker posts can be prone to vandalism.

Audience

- Children in family or education groups.
- Special needs visitors.
- Can be tailored to different audiences.

Costings

- Please see page 10 of the HLF Interpretation Guidelines [Click here](#).

Planning

- Decide on your target audience and what you want your trail to do. Educate, entertain? [Click here](#) to find out more.
- If it is for families you may want to consider making this more interactive, for instance adding brass rubbings or using a character to illustrate the trail.
- Involve the community from the start by gathering a group of local people together to share ideas.
- What form will your trail take - will it be leaflet based, will you use marker posts? Will you mark the points on your trail physically or will it be purely paper based?
- Decide how people will access your trail - handed out onsite, downloadable from website, leaflet in tourist information centres.
- Will you produce the leaflet yourself or have someone create and format this for you? There will be a cost involved if you want this to be produced professionally.
- Where will you store your leaflets?
- Draw up a timeline of your project - do you have an anniversary or an open day you would like to have your trail in place for?
- Consider contacting groups who have carried out a trail, they may be able to offer advice.





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Research

- Establish what you already know about your waterway (history, people involved).
- Are there any gaps in your research? If so, who will do this - recruit a specialist volunteer or a current volunteer?
- Conduct your research using a range of oral histories, libraries, archives and photos.
- Collect baseline data: How many people use the towpath/visit the waterway now? This data can support your evaluation and funding bids.

Content

- Draw up a list of key things you want to include, points included on the trail need to be as interesting as possible. Can you tell a story using different locations on your trail?
- Remember you do not always need to see the physical remains of a building to bring to life what used to be there.
- If you are creating an educational trail for schools, then you need to make sure the content links to the syllabus. There is more information on the syllabus [here](#).

- You should aim for between 8 and 12 points of interest initially.
- Do you have one prominent figure associated with your stretch of waterway/local area - can you use this to drive your trail?
- When writing the text consider that short, sharp facts can be more memorable and are more likely to be read.
- Use simple language but colourful language.
- Be flexible and change your points of interest if they are not working as a whole, or you have too many.
- Will your route be linear or take people back to the starting point? Do you have any obvious starting points- a car park, good off road parking etc?
- Make your trail look attractive and eye-catching- photos, cartoons, imaginative layout.
- Proof read your text, preferably by someone who has no involvement with the project or waterways; this will help you to target any technical language.
- Please see the Canal & River Trust's guidance on accessibility for advice how to write the trail [here](#).

Trails

Trial Trail

- Test the trail before launching with a few people who were not involved in creating it. They will give you feedback on what works and what does not.
- You will need to think about health and safety. [Click here](#) to view the general Risk Assessment.
- Publicise your event using social media, local press, word of mouth, posters.
- Why not hold an open day to launch your trail.
- Ensure you have enough leaflets to meet demand.
- Keep a record: It can be useful to take photos. You could submit some to a local paper for instance. For advice on acquiring photo permission please see the Canal & River Trust photo permission guidelines. [Click here](#) to find out more.



Evaluate and Celebrate

- Monitor the number of people using the trail.
- Carry out on site surveys.
- Hand out a survey form with the trail which visitors can complete.
- Organise focus groups of people who have used the trail to gain feedback.
- For more information, please view the evaluation section [here](#).





Skipton Castle

If you visit the dramatic Skipton Castle in Yorkshire, on arrival you will be handed an illustrated tour sheet which contains all that is needed to unlock the history of the castle.

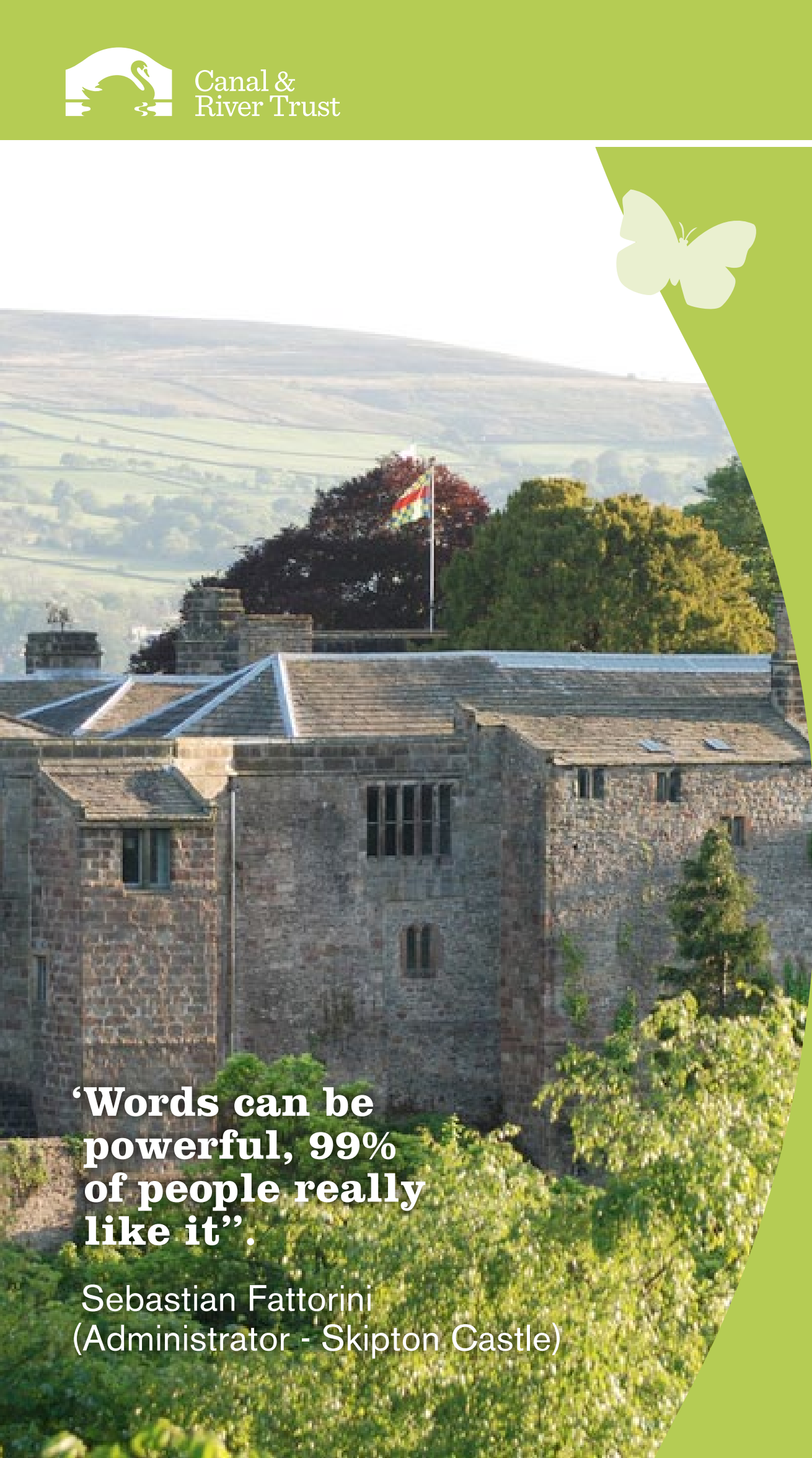
The tour sheet comprises of 50 grids, which guides visitors around the story of the castle. Introduced in the 1970's the trail has stood the test of time. The illustrated tour sheet which was designed on site is easily updatable. Over the years the

sheet has been produced in other languages. Recently, sheets written in Chinese & Russian have been added to the collection. Another advantage to this trail is that it manages visitor flow and also helps visitors not to miss any parts of the castle.

Visitors have the choice to delve further into the history of the castle with more information provided on interpretation panels around the castle. This interpretation method has proven popular with the vast majority of visitors enjoying the interpretation.

<http://www.skiptoncastle.co.uk/>

[Click here](#) to view the trail worksheet



‘Words can be powerful, 99% of people really like it’.

Sebastian Fattorini
(Administrator - Skipton Castle)



Stourport Basins Discovery Trail

The historic Stourport Basins in North Worcestershire were restored between 2005 and 2009. The project gave the buildings a face lift and restored the basins to their former glory.

One aim of the work was to engage with visitors through a range of interpretative methods, for example interpretation panels showing an 18th century etching of how the landscape would have looked. During the project a great deal of valuable information was gained on the history of the surrounding area.

Those working on the project did not want the knowledge to evaporate and so created a detailed discovery trail targeted at the enthusiast. The trail is made up of 25 points and covers the fascinating history of James Brindley's site, for which much of the information was discovered during the restoration.

The trail is readily accessible to the public and is available online so that visitors can print it off ahead of time for their visit. There are markers dotted around the site which correspond with the number on the leaflets to facilitate the trail which are noticeable but not ruining the environment, and which aim to attract visitors who were not previously aware of the trail. The interpretation was successful with an increase in visitor numbers in the years following the opening. Stourport Forward, a group who contributed to the restoration project, remains on site organising events and leases the Windlass café. Stourport Basins remains a popular destination amongst boaters and tourists alike, since the restoration.

'The trail paints a really good picture for visitors'.

Alex Ball (HLF Project Manager)

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

[Click here](#) to view the Stourport Trail