

CASE STUDY

HOY HERITAGE CENTRE: TALES O HOY

Whilst being closed to the public due to Covid-19 regulations the team at Hoy Heritage Centre organised new impactful ways to display and share resources in the heritage centre. Funded through Museums Galleries Scotland.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

PROJECT FUNDING:

- This project cost £10,000
- It was fully funded through the MGS Recovery and Resilience Fund (an emergency fund provided through additional funding from the Scottish Government in 2020/21 to help the independent sector deal with the impact of COVID-19).

PROJECT DELIVERY:

- We started the research and interviews for the podcasts in December 2020 and they were published as a weekly release from May 2021.

PARTNERS:

- Our partner on the project, ORCA, part of the University of the Highlands and Islands Archaeology Institute, created an interactive map for the podcasts, adding another layer to the experience.

THE PROJECT:

A fresh design of our website saw an increase in traffic, which prompted us to find ways of developing that audience and engaging the community in the creation of new content. We decided to fulfil an ambition to make an audio tour through a new platform for us, podcasting.

Starting with the idea of walks around the parish, each podcast episode moves along a physical route in a circular journey, stopping at points of interest. Listeners explore the culture and landscape through personal stories, archaeology, natural history and local history. We utilised information held at our heritage centre and at Orkney Library & Archive and focussed on topics and places as starting points for interviews with islanders.

The content is available to both island visitors and virtual visitors. It can be used to enhance the experience for walkers in the area, or to embark on journeys of the imagination. Each episode has its own web page allowing us to direct visitors to more content connected to the stories they have heard.

Intangible culture, such as the folklore of the area and the experience of living in the same space over generations, is reliant on the telling and retelling of stories to maintain that culture. 'Tales o Hoy' weaves these stories in an entertaining and appealing way, validating that culture, preserving dialect, widening the audience for those stories and ultimately contributing to the well-being and survival of our community's identity.

The combination of local response and worldwide reach has amazed us.



“This was an opportunity to explore creative ways to take the stories held in our heritage centre out into the landscape and make them available to a wider audience.”

Rebecca Marr, Hoy Heritage officer

CHALLENGES AND SUCCESSES:

- Drawing on a previous relationship with ORCA we developed the project with Community Engagements and Outreach Archaeologist Dan Lee. The scriptwriting and editing was undertaken by Mark Jenkins who has previously made films for Hoy Heritage Centre. Both are knowledgeable about the heritage of the island and community. This allowed us to hit the ground running.
- It was challenging to create a community buzz at the start of the project due to covid-19 restrictions. However, the response was greater than anticipated, with over 40 voices in archive and new recordings (our parish population is under 40). So much good material was gathered that the original plan for five 10 minute podcasts grew to five 30 minute episodes.
- Offering the content on multiple platforms that support each other - podcast / dedicated web pages / interactive map -created a deeper experience for our audience.

THE IMPACT IT HAS MADE:

- The uptake has been greater than we imagined. So far there has been over 2800 downloads of the podcast across 25 countries. Our website has attracted 475% more visitors than last year and almost 8000 views since the podcasts.
- We made front page of the Press and Journal!
- We have raised awareness of our venue within Orkney, in the UK and internationally and have

promoted the island and created something for tourists as well as locals.

- Now that we have reopened the podcasts have given us additional content to build on.

LESSONS LEARNED:

- Challenges can become opportunities. Further Covid-19 restrictions meant we could not hold certain events. Single session recordings meant it took longer however more time was spent with community members, many of them elderly, at a time when opportunities for company was restricted. Archaeologist Dan Lee transferred his focus from community events to creating an interactive map, offering virtual engagement with the landscape.
- Be in dialogue with your funders. MGS were responsive to our request to reallocate monies from underused areas of the budget: for example the longer podcasts meant we needed more editing time and had underused travel budget for cancelled events.

GUIDANCE:

- Ask your interviewees open questions. Often the best stories come from conversation not from a list of set questions. Try to avoid interviewees reading their script, encourage notes and prompts so that their voice sounds lively.
- Consider commissioning music for your audio project, not only can this greatly enhance the final product but it also supports artists.
- Research companies who offer podcasting platforms and find the best fit for you.
- Build on previous engagements. We built on a previous digital storytelling project, Orkney Story Stack, run locally by Orkney Library & Archive and nationally by The Scottish Book Trust.

USEFUL RESOURCES:

If you would like more information about this project please contact Rebecca Marr, Hoy Heritage Officer email: hoyheritage@btinternet.com

Tales o Hoy website/podcast: <https://hoyheritage.wordpress.com/tales-o-hoy/>

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