



## INNOCASTLE WEBINAR

**Three's a Crowd: The use and promotion of new technologies for the creation of digital resources for touristic promotion of heritage through open participation**

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Hi, I'm Duncan Ogle-Skan from National Trust, here today to talk to you about the Blossom Campaign that we started about 18 months ago in the Spring of 2020, when quite a lot of other stuff was going on in the world, but actually started really small.

But let me tell you a bit about where the campaign is now and where the idea has come to.

So, why Blossom? Well Spring Blossom is a global symbol of hope and renewal we know around the world it symbolises a fresh start for nature every year.

But is also bound into symbolism around the world about renewal, refreshment, people coming back outside after cold and wet winters and darkness as well.

And in spring 2020, it sparked with us the idea of something incredibly potent both from the idea of rebirth and new life from extraordinary global events - but also it was about an anchor to help us engage people with nature, one of the key parts of our strategy here at National Trust.

And so, the elements of Blossom as a campaign for us which allow us to talk across our strategy - looking at land and nature; people's experiences with our places; urban places and the importance of nature and culture for people in urban spaces; and also, about growing support - how we continue to build support across our audiences.

For us at National Trust, it's a wonderful way for us to bring a range of ways to deliver public benefit. So local access, more urban access to nature, reasons for people to visit and experience nature and the outdoors, and also a brilliant way to grow support for our cause and in a number of ways.

For the nation as a whole, creating an annual moment to connect with the beauty and the meaning of Blossom is also a great way to demonstrate the Trust and the benefits of the work that we do but also to create simple mechanisms to help people to support nature and the climate.

And also understanding that people are different and enjoy different things. To give multiple ways for people to engage and to support the Trust.

When we built the program, started building the program we looked at a number of different needs and we recognised that to have a really successful program after all - and also one with longevity (we want this to run for maybe 5 or 10 years) it needed to tick a number of boxes, it needed to be in the middle of this diagram here.

So, we had to have a sense of true organisational need. We had to have a real and demonstrable conservation need. We had to understand what people's interests were and indeed what their needs were. And we also wanted to tap into what I've called here regular human behaviour, had to be able to evidence the idea that we were latching onto something

people would actually do rather than trying to create something that we hoped they would start doing instead.

In terms of organisational need we had to ensure that we were clear what we were trying to achieve. We wanted to make sure that everyone understood why we were doing it in the first place and that as many as people as possible within the organisation understood what it was for.

It's really hard to support something if you don't truly understand what its purpose is. So, getting all the organisation onboard, connecting it directly to our strategy and then helping people internally to understand it was incredibly important to us as we moved the program forward.

In terms of grounding the activity in a conservation need, it was really important for us that there's a clear and recognisable purpose behind the work that we do and also that it has evidential proof.

We have some really wonderful research which, on top of the more obvious and much more mainstream understanding of issues for climate and the issues for nature, we have some really wonderful work that we've done with the University of Derby in terms of the connection people have with nature and how we drive additional nature connection so that people are much more likely to care about nature and much more likely to act in a way to help it and support it in the future.

We also have to understand whether people really get those issues and understand what the conservation need. To what extent are we tapping into something that people already know about? To what extent are we driving new news for those people.

In terms of people's interests as I mentioned - are people aware of it? Do they care about what we're asking them to care about too? Who needs to care about it in the future? Is this an issue for people right now or for certain demographics or is it something more general that more people could understand over time? And also, what's their current level of action or inaction? Are they already doing something to help or are they looking for a thing to latch onto?

And the final thing thinking about regular human behaviour we've had some experiences at the Trust in the past where we've created opportunities for people to share their content or their stories and if I'm honest when they look back on them their success has been very closely linked to how difficult we make it for them to share.

So, if we're asking them to do something which is currently not something that they do. Or to go to a specific place to share. Or potentially put barriers in the way of them sharing, it makes it much harder to do and it tends to mean that it will only happen when you're asking them. Or in some way incentivising them to do it.

So, we look at people as being instinctively social, being habitual - they like to do things regularly and on an ongoing basis. People as simple – as in you need to make things easy for people. And that includes both the actions you ask them to take but also the arguments that you put in front of them. But they're complex and nuanced which means that they like different things sometimes. So, again thinking about multiple ways to engage are really important. And people love convenience. So, the harder you make it for people to engage and take part the less likely they are to do it. If you make it super simple they'll do it and they'll do it really regularly.

Now for us, for Blossom, we tried to tick all of those boxes. We tried to make sure we had as much and as rich reasons for continuing and making a success of the project as we possibly could. So, from an organisational need perspective we have set ourselves the objective over the next 10 years to plant 20 million trees. A significant number of those will be Blossoming trees. So that's a big connection to work we're doing. We have a Blossom rings programme which is putting Blossom-oriented spaces into urban areas, I'll show you that in a second.

We're also looking to increase the reach and relevance of the Trust so talking to large-scale audiences through broadcast media, but also helping audiences to understand that the Trust is many faceted. It produces and looks after many different types of place and has a really very strong role in looking after nature and helping nature recover.

It also has many additional benefits. So, we know that talking about Blossom and talking about Blossoming experiences adds to the benefits we can provide to the nation in time in terms of people's visitation, them buying memberships, and their secondary spend when they come to our places.

We also have an internal desire to help. So, our staff and volunteers really want to take part in lots of the things that we do, and Blossom is one of these things they can take part in really simple and easily, which is great.

In terms of conservation need we have a reducing number of Blossoming trees in the UK and we're just about to start some research on understanding that and understanding the role that Blossom can play in recovering that position.

We have very low urban access to nature and low nature connection in places where there is low access to nature, something that was increasingly shown as problematic during the pandemic particularly when we had limited access to outdoor space.

We know that pollinators are vital to the health of nature and also that the UK has the lowest tree coverage in Europe.

So, we have lots of work to do in terms of the conservation work that we're doing and the broader public's interest in that.

We know that climate action is required and never has been more obvious after the couple of weeks of COP that we've just had.

And it's right there in terms of our audiences being interested in this as well. So, from our perspective we are talking about, and we are trying to help solve issues that the public have an interest in already.

So, we come to people's interests and needs. We know that people love Blossom and I'll talk about that in a second. We see examples from around the world of people showing their love and care for such beautiful side of nature particularly in the spring.

People are increasingly caring about climate change and the world that we live in, and many people want to help with climate change and nature recovery, but they need easy ways to support it and they need many and various ways.

I talked about the nuance which we have in the public – for some, they only need to see the opportunity to help plant a tree. For others, they're going to need a bit more than that and hopefully Blossom provides a little bit of that too.

Final part just about human behaviour. We know that giving makes people feel good so the opportunity to give, to support the environment, is going to help people in their well-being. So wherever possible find people that opportunity to support.

People act on social proof so if they see other people taking part they're much more likely to try to take part themselves. So, understanding how we demonstrate people's involvement is really important.

And the final point there is sharing on social media, sharing on platforms that people have connection to their friends, family and others releases dopamine, the reward stimulant inside us that makes us feel good. So again, providing that opportunity for regular human behaviour to be repeated and repeatable is really important to us.

I talked about regular human behaviour - we were really looking to build on examples around the world of Blossoming festivals. You see here in Washington; you see in Japan the festivals that they have there. The experience of hanami which is the event you see here people drinking tea and sharing food under the Blossoming trees.

But also taking inspiration from other behaviour that we've seen in the UK so the map that you see here is from a website called UK Snow which is where people are tweeting when they see snow and the levels of snow that they see and they're finding. And this map plots that with their postcode so you can see how heavy the snow is in the area that you're in.

So, we just tried to mash up if you like some of the real lived experiences, the joy at Blossom appearing during spring and then some of the digital experience of how we demonstrate people's love and joy of those things.

Blossom Watch for us in 2021 - we started investing a little bit more. In 2020 we started the use of a hashtag and promoted the use of a hashtag really right at the time when the country was locked down and people's access to nature was really limited.

So it was very small scale for us and we were just trying something out in 2021 we went much bigger it became the first point of our brand advertising for the year and a real point of access for people to share the hashtag to see some wonderful imagery of Blossom around the country, featured heavily in our magazine and across our channels we had we had a raffle, we had other fundraising activity on going at the time and we really tried to push and encourage the idea that sharing images of Blossom particularly for people that couldn't get out to see themselves because of lockdown was going to be a really wonderful thing to do.

And we used digital. So that was all activity taking place on other people's platforms. We were asking people to share on their own networks rather than share with us directly. But we used our own platforms to promote the idea of sharing and then also to show people actually taking part.

So, what you can see here over on the right of the screen is almost the before and after. The screenshot at the top is when the team building the campaign were testing it, so you've got five little points there where people were testing the idea of tweeting with a picture and a hashtag. And then during the campaign as you can see several hundreds of points on our map showing blossom and the use of #Blossomwatch. Now we also have examples of that across the world where the same hashtag was used by people as far distant from each other as Canada and India.

Which was wonderful to see. Not something we were trying to achieve but something that was great to see. So, a natural behaviour that people were doing. And importantly these were only the map versions. People used their own location in their tweets. We weren't

asking people to put up a postcode. We weren't asking people to share their town or the location because it would have been another thing that would have been a barrier to them doing it in the first place.

This was all about us showing people participating. And that was also important for audiences that aren't online or aren't on those particular channels, so we were able to evidence through our email and through our magazine. In fact, we were doing a feature in January in our magazine to follow up to show the participation that people had in the campaign and much of this was for our audiences that wouldn't have taken to Twitter or Instagram to be able to show people taking part in it and evidence this idea of social proof of participation in action.

We had broadcast media as well. I'm going to try and show the ad and hopefully it will come across on the recording OK.

So, as I said that was broadcast activity on TV. We had press coverage as well. All with the idea of showing the idea of sharing if that makes sense.

I mentioned before showing conservation in action and this piece of work in Stratford in East London on the Olympic Park is the first of several projects that we have running in towns and cities across the UK to put Blossom back into public spaces.

So, you see pictures in the middle on the right-hand side there of Hilary McGrady our Director-General and the Mayor of London. We opened this in May this year after earlier planting, and so we have created a space representative for London of all of the boroughs, and a space for contemplation particularly linked for the people of London to the aftereffects of the Corona virus pandemic.

As you'll see in the bottom left there, we had great work and support with the Mayor of London's office and Transport for London who took over the underground roundels across a number of different local tube stations.

So, we had Blossom and the idea of Blossom, and the Trust being brought to people in the places where they live.

As I said we have other projects going on this year for further release next and some big activity going on in Birmingham which is supportive of the Commonwealth Games which is also taking place next year.

And it wouldn't be brought really to life for the Trust if it didn't involve programming at our properties, in spite of the fact that our properties were really only just reopening or starting to reopen when the Blossom season was on earlier this year.

We had amazing efforts by our limited staff, due to furlough and due to lock down, but across the country they took part and gave interpretation of Blossom correct for their property and offered people the chance to take a photo and to share it with people that couldn't come or for reasons couldn't travel.

So again, just trying to find ways to engage people when they're at our places and to get them to share.

Planting and programming development at 47 National Trust places and significant support from partners and funders to bring that all to life as well, as well as personal donors.

We were asking for money at the same time as running this activity and so we had direct asks for money through direct response TV activity and some direct work as well. So, a real all channels approach to making the campaign work.

And we also engaged our staff. So this is an image here we put onto desktops around the National Trust so that they understood what we were asking people to do and a series of desktop pictures that we used described the activity that we were doing, shared images that had been shared with us and really helped to bring the organisation with us and to brighten their day because seeing this on your desktop screen is much nicer than AN Other picture so it was nice to be able to bring that to our teams and help them to feel part of the campaign as well.

In terms of results this was our first year, so we're not entirely sure what good really looked like but in terms of getting our activity out there and engaging people with Blossom as a whole and bringing it to our audiences we think we did pretty well. We're really pleased with the results. We raised over £1,000,000 through our fundraising. We reached half a million people through our social channels and had 65,000 uses of #Blossomwatch in that springtime. We also ended the campaign with a sort of Blossom day on the 24 April and we managed to trend at number one whilst we blasted Blossom across everyone's two screens. And just a reminder of the real beauty of Spring and also in an in-depth way we also engaged with a number of MPs. Nearly 70 MPs committed to planting Blossom trees which they're going through the process of doing now in readiness for next spring.

We're going through the preparation for our activity next year with an increased focus on fundraising for the work that we do and we're looking forward to bringing even more Blossom to even more people through as many screens as we possibly can in 2022. Thanks very much.

**Innocastle** stands for: INNOvating policy instruments for preservation, transformation and exploitation of heritage CASTLEs, manors and gardens. The partnership of INNOCASTLE consists of five European partners: the National Institute for Heritage (Romania), Ghent University College (Belgium), the Province of Badajoz (Spain), the National Trust (United Kingdom) and the Province of Gelderland (The Netherlands). For more information about Innocastle: [www.interregeurope.eu/innocastle/](http://www.interregeurope.eu/innocastle/)

