



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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Good afternoon and thank you for the opportunity to be here today to tell you about our work engaging the public on the Saint Helena Historic Environment Record.

For those who might not be aware of where Saint Helena is, we are located in the middle of the South Atlantic Ocean between Brazil and Angola.

You can see here we are very isolated. We're a British Overseas Territory. That's quite a small Island. We have about 122 square kilometres and we have a population of about 4,500 people. So, we're known as Saint Helenians or more informally, Saints.

A few pictures just to illustrate the very varied landscapes on the Island, showing you the lower edges and the lush and green interior. You can see from some of these pictures that the Island has very steep topography.

So, the photos show the capital which is Jamestown. Over here on the right, we have High Knoll Fort which is one of the Seven Wonders of Saint Helena and shows a really beautiful fortification. On the lower right we have the Central Ridge of which the highest point on the Island is Diana's Peak at over 820m. The Central Peaks are also an area of incredible biodiversity. The Island holds a number of endemic species, and this area also provides the majority of the Island's freshwater supply.

And then finally an area showing the coastal zone, so we can see the boats down here. This is where the capital of Jamestown is located.

So, the Island was managed by the British East India Company for over 150 years and before it was handed back to the Crown. The location of the Island right in the middle of the Transatlantic Passage was a very strategic spot for shipping and thus the Island became crucial for the development of the British Empire. During this period there was a boom of construction and fortification of the Island for defence from invasion, to protect this strategic asset. Most of these fortifications are still around although they are slowly degrading over time. Although they were never truly used or destroyed through war.

The Island is incredibly rich in history and culture and built heritage.

Just a quick background to the Saint Helena Historic Environment Record project. So, as you will know many places around the world have Historic Environment Records to record their built heritage. It's important to know what is where and what the baseline condition is of each asset in order to be able to protect them. The Saint Helena Historic Environment Record was first developed under the Saint Helena National Trust in 2011. This was led by Ben Jeff's and a number of volunteers on Island and together they accumulated over 1000 assets and 30,000 survey points.

The HER is an existing catalogue of tangible heritage on Saint Helena covering anything from buildings and barracks, cemeteries, forts, walls, and paths.

It records what they are, where they are, the historical context, how significant they are and why - and what condition they were in about 10 years ago. It was an excellent resource that was used for a number of years after being put on to a bespoke website. However, this is no longer supported by the server therefore the information is no longer accessible or easily usable. The current status of the historic environment record is that it can be accessed by a PDF of all of the assets, which includes photos. This information is also available in a spreadsheet or there is a map layer that can be accessed as well.

So, fast forward to a decade later, this project was funded by historic England and involved a gap analysis to review, update and add to the 2011 assets. We hope to also make the HDR available online again in on a GIS-based platform that will be free and accessible to all. So, this project was a pilot project to see if we can establish an HDR using methods that could be replicated across the UK overseas territories. In order for this to be replicable, this needed to be low-cost and straightforward.

This current project is still ongoing we've had a few hurdles with the tech solution to make the data fully accessible online. For this we had to decide what digital platform to use, how we could host the site, who would host the site and who would be responsible for the future maintenance of the site.

So, for this we chose the platform arches which is a well-known heritage database. Historic England were able to help us create an instance of this and support to the IT sections. Arches also has an app that would allow for easy data collection and uploading of information through use of mobile phones and tablets from the field, and this approach would revolutionize the way we can collect the data and update the Saint Helena HDR on Saint Helena.

Use of an app would also encourage citizen science so we'd be able to include the younger generation and get them interested in going out and visiting various built heritage sites or recording cultural heritage and then uploading straight online.

So why is the Saint Helena HDR important? The HER documents important places and traces of our past it provides a valuable record of Saint Helena's history and heritage for future generations.

This project had a focus on education and outreach. we tried to include school groups or join groups and just reach out to children to get them to get them aware of, and excited about cultural heritage.

In order to protect our built heritage or to preserve the memories associated with it we first have to know what assets we have, where they are or were, what condition they are in and what is known or remembered about them. The HER provides a useful tool to inform conservation planning and development and it's important to make all of this information free, updated, and accessible again.

So, for this update of the HER our most important aim was to make sure that cultural heritage was included. We wanted to speak with people and record their memories and folklore associated with spaces where possible as we felt that this aspect, this cultural heritage aspect from a locals perspective was perhaps missing in the first iteration of the HER.

So, what methods do we use? We went out and held workshops and presentations to local societies, for example this is a presentation at the Heritage Society Annual General Meeting,

and we then went back and did a bespoke workshop with them to look at the various assets and get their thoughts on what should be updated or what has changed.

We also did consultation interviews with land and property owners, speaking with them to get their views on the assets over the past decade. They provided us with updates of work that had been done on various assets, photos where they had them of works in progress, and we also spoke with other stakeholders to consolidate data, photos, and memories of these spaces.

We conducted site visits to priority sites to assess the condition of assets and take updated photos. Where we weren't able to get this through stakeholder interviews. And we also did this to add new records to the HER. So, for example this is a picture of the local Director of the Museum, who is also a trustee of the Saint Helena national Trust. He came out with us for a site visit to the Great Wood Wall, which was built in the 18th century to protect endemic forests from being destroyed.

We also joined walking groups, going with them to various areas around the Island when they were going areas that might be of interest from the HER perspective and were able to get their perspectives on various areas, speak with them about memories that they had over the years of visiting these sites, and from talking to people just in general day-to-day basis. we had loads of people who volunteered to come along on site visits with us and get involved and they were very keen to learn about the history behind various buildings.

We used local media. So, on Saint Helena there are some people who prefer local newspapers and radio, and they aren't online at all. So, we weren't able to engage them through social media. So, we used print promotion and interviews directly with them. So, for example with this update that is on screen we put this ad in the local paper, just a launch of the project and a little before and after photo of some interesting areas in Jamestown.

And after this we were approached by a lady to ask for a copy of the first picture as it contained a shot of her family car from the 1970s and she would like a little keepsake of that.

Others approached us to discuss their memories of the buildings in the first photo: who worked there, the area behind on the hills where they used to play when they were younger, and we also included these updates in the Saint Helena National Trust international newsletters to our supporters both on Island and overseas.

But the focus of our digital efforts was on social media, so we used this to engage saints on Island and overseas.

More than any other platform Facebook is the main way Saint Helenians keep up to date with Island news and in contact with each other.

We used before and after photos to show transformations of various buildings and areas, changes in use and often the longevity of a building and the context in which it sits.

We also included historic context where we had it, and we shared these posts to pages and groups with a large reach and an active Saint membership.

So just a little bit about the pictures themselves. Over on the left we have Rock Rose which was an 18th Century house built by one of our former governors. In the 20th century it fell into disrepair and was acquired by a local family who then proceeded to restore the house.

You can see in 2018 it was opened back up to the public.

In the middle picture we have the Old Customs House on our Historic Wharf. The sketch above is from 1787 and it shows the water tank that was used to supply ships that were stopping at Saint Helena to restock.

And then the picture at the bottom you can see the same building, relatively the same, but the context has changed so this time it's more modern containers on the Wharf. Some men on the floor and now the building is used as a fishmonger.

And over on the right is one of our field trips to a swimming area that was used in the 1970s. So, we can see the change in the area over the decades from the 1900s, and the 70s, in the first version of the HER and then the present day. We can see how nature has transformed that site over the years.

We also had a work experience student with us for a few days who did some research on various assets within the HER and they've done a few posts of those assets that interests her.

The use of social media particularly engaged younger people on Island who are perhaps less likely to attend formal workshops or the consultations but it's basically something they're interested in and online they are more likely to interact and share it, to like it.

And finally, I'll finish with two of our most popular posts on social media. so, the post on the left shows what is now the Bank Building and Market Street.

And then you can see in the bottom picture the building is still there, the Market Street is still. Some modern bits have come into the picture, like the railings, the pavements, the street has been tarmacked. But overall, the setting of the area is still the same. And then over on the right we have Ladder Hill Fort which shows in the 1860s the use by the military. And then today the area is the Headquarters of the Saint Helena Fire Service who very kindly agreed to pose for us for this before and after picture.

We found that posts that included people or recognisable buildings that could evoke memories of people's childhoods appear to have been the most popular posts that we had on Facebook. These posts kicked off lots of discussion with the public and not just interaction online, but people stopping us in the street or popping into the Saint Helena National Trust to speak with us for a chat.

And I think through this we've definitely seen a renewed interest in cultural heritage that we hadn't seen before the start of the project.

So, if you're wanting to replicate something like this our recommendation would be to make the engagement work for you. For us workshops and consultations worked for a specific group but in order to engage with the young and the Saint diaspora using Facebook was the best way to achieve this for us.

All the methods we used had different strengths in engaging various sectors across the public, but we found that a combination of methods ensured a more, fuller engagement with all people.

So, thank you for listening. More information can be found at the website link included here. And have a good rest of the session.

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/



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