

EPIP Industrial Heritage Leaflet Writing Guide

How to Write Lively Leaflets



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A leaflet is a very flexible medium for heritage interpretation. It gives you scope to introduce a site or theme, promote one or more sites to visitors, or take people around a site on a self-guided tour.

Make it attractive

The cover of a leaflet is your advert for your site. People are more likely to pick your leaflet up if it is attractive and has a clear title.

Design, layout and contents are important. These help people identify what the leaflet is about and encourage them to read it all.

People look at leaflets in all sorts of different ways after picking it up – maybe the rear cover first, open the first fold only or open it all up in one go. So ensure it looks good however they use it.

To create a good leaflet, ask yourself:

What key messages do you wish to communicate? Be selective and don't try to include everything you know about the site.

- What are you trying to achieve?
 - 1) Subject – tell the heritage story.
 - 2) Behavioural – tell people where to go, about conservation issues, dangers etc.
 - 3) Emotional – help visitors engage with the story, e.g. working conditions.
- Who is your target audience?

The essential design elements of a well laid-out leaflet are:

- A size people can easily use.
 - 1) A4 is a good cheap way to briefly introduce a site in a very small number of words.
 - 2) A3 balances space to write and include pictures with not being too big for people to use outdoors.
 - 3) You can go up to A2 if it does not have to be fully folded out for use. Winds catch paper very easily.
 - 4) It fits in standard leaflet racks. DL (A4 landscape folded into thirds) and A5 portrait are the most common sizes.
- Folds or staples? A DL-sized stapled booklet is more expensive but handy for guides to numerous sites.
- An eye-catching cover. This immediately communicates what the leaflet is about to attract your target audience. Place the title towards the top of the leaflet – in case it is filed behind other leaflets on a tiered rack – and include an attractive image. These should stand out from a distance. Minimum text size should be 24 point.
- Put your rear cover to good use. You may wish to include an introductory headline or sentence, and details such as location, directions, visitor opening times, website for further details, etc.
- Lay out the text so that it fits nicely with the folds.
- People should find the start of the text on the first page or fold they see when they open the leaflet.
- Include a small number of images that illustrate the key messages. A map may be important for people to orientate themselves.
- Text that is accessible and engagingly-written. Brevity, interest, leading people on to read more and type size are really important.

Well-read words

They've opened the leaflet therefore they're interested. The layout, images and words will hold their interest.

It is important to keep it brief. There is more space than a panel but it's not unlimited. How much text you include depends on your aims but still try to keep it as **short and readable** as possible.

A rule of thumb for an A3 leaflet is no more than 1500 words on one side. This will leave room for illustrations. If you include a large map on one side don't try to squash too many words around it.

Use short sentences and break the text up in to small digestible sections through paragraphs, subheadings and layout.

Avoid jargon and technical terms unless they evoke the activities and are explained.

Use no more than two fonts. The type size should be at least 12 point.

People with even slight visual impairments find it easier to read text which is on a plain background and has a strong contrast. Light coloured text, or text on pictures or a patterned background is difficult to read.

Relate to your audience by using an active writing style. We often write in the third person but try writing in the second person, e.g. 'You can see the waterwheel to the left..' rather than 'The waterwheel is to the left..' Try using active rather than passive verbs and placing the subject first, e.g. 'Foundry workers hammered the iron..' is better than 'The iron was hammered by foundry workers..'

Bring the site alive. Evoke the experience of being there when it was a working, living place full of people, sights, sounds and smells.

And finally...

Creating an interpretation leaflet is fun and creative. The hard work is choosing what to leave out, but by doing so you will increase the likelihood that visitors will learn about your site.

This information leaflet was written by Bill Bevan, inHeritage, as part of the East Peak Industrial Heritage Support Programme, which is co-funded by English Heritage and the East Peak Leader Programme (with funding from Defra and the European Union).



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