



heritage open days

50 TOP



I P S

from
organisers
for organisers



In March 2011, Heritage Open Days organisers from across the country came together to swap experiences and ideas. The Heritage Open Days team compiled their fifty top tips on what makes a great Heritage Open Days event. Between April and June, we posted them on twitter, tip by tip, tweet by tweet. We loved the challenge of packing useful information into bites of no more than 140 characters. On popular request, we've put together this little booklet to share these tweet tips, in slightly edited form, with those who don't follow our twitter stream.

And of course, we'd love to hear from you if you have any more surefire ideas and tried and tested tricks you'd like us to pass on to fellow organisers - if not on twitter then in our newsletters. Email us on hods@english-heritage.org.uk



Connect with us on twitter [@heritageopenday](https://twitter.com/heritageopenday)

TOPTIPS: DO SOMETHING SPECIAL



#hods1 Do you have access to hidden gems? Inspire curiosity, reveal the unseen to give a new perspective on a familiar site



#hods2 Deliver the 'wow factor' by seeking spectacular/quirky buildings to lure the crowds



#hods3 Think human - an emotive/tragic/quirky story can help engage people with a site



#hods4 Variety is the spice of life – try to offer a range of events/activities in your area or at your site

#hods4a ...or organise activities that appeal to different audience groups: different ages, backgrounds, abilities



#hods5 Same old same old? Sustain interest! Adopt new themes or uncover new stories to change the angle of your interpretation



#hods6 We learn by doing - offer different ways of exploring sites: craft demos/activities, trails, treasure hunts, I-spy activities

#hods7 Appeal to the senses - object handling makes history more accessible, musical events can enhance the experience of a space



#hods8 Capture the imagination - storytelling can enthrall, projecting archive films/photos can engage

#hods8a ... re-enactments bring history alive, stewards and tour guides bring a place alive

#hods9 Something to remember us by - tangible mementos encourage return: postcards, leaflets, certificates, badges, fridge magnets, mugs etc

#hods10 Never underestimate the power of refreshments! Tea and cake: delicious and profitable, celebrate food heritage with local delicacies



TOP TIPS: BEING ORGANISED



#hods11 Register asap – the early bird deadline for max support from us is usually 1 May!



#hods11a Tell us if anything needs adding/ amending later – we can make changes right up to the weekend itself

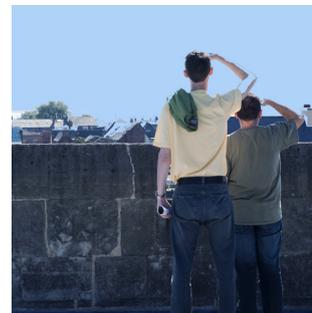
#hods12 Be imaginative, but realistic, don't overstretch yourself – leave lots of time to get things done

#hods13 Set deadlines and stick to them – especially if you are coordinating a number of entries

#hods14 Think about Health and Safety – do a risk assessment; template form, examples and tips are available at <http://www.heritageopendays.org.uk/organisers/registration-essentials/>

#hods15 Clustering: link with other local groups to cross promote activities and share visitors

#hods15a ...and if you don't know who else takes part locally, get in touch with us





#hods16 Ensure site information is accurate and up-to-date, and everyone knows who's doing what

#hods16a Try to give volunteers/staff a chance to visit all the sites taking part locally before the event

#hods17 Think about having a 'left luggage store' for people visiting multiple sites

#hods18 Make it easy for people to find the event and move round it – plan access routes and use clear signage

#hods18a Reverse graffiti is an imaginative way to signpost hidden sites on pavements...
http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Reverse_graffiti

#hods19 Evaluation: plan how to capture feedback to inspire future activities and attract funding. Our forms will be available in July

#hods20 Have a plan B – hope for the best, prepare for the worst! (e.g. wet weather; late changes; staff illness)



TOP TIPS: FINDING HELP



#hods21 Recruit enough helpers - volunteers can't deliver a tour, welcome visitors and answer queries all at the same time...

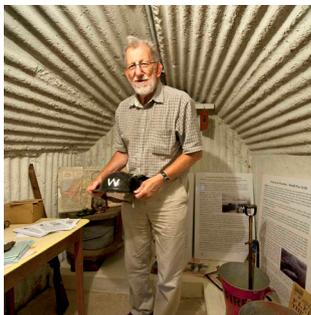


#hods21a Hunt for help - find volunteers by contacting local networks: History/Genealogy/Archaeological Societies, Civic Societies, Friends Groups, WI, Scouts/Girlguides, local companies with a corporate social responsibility policy etc



#hods22 Delight in diversity! The wider the range of those involved, the more perspectives and skills on offer to create a great event

#hods23 Keep shifts short - The shorter the volunteer slot (2/3 hrs), the easier to recruit. They may well stay on cos it's fun



#hods24 Utilise skills – Help ensure a cheerful welcome & an informative tour by matching volunteers to roles that they suit and enjoy

#hods25 Avoid confusion – Brief/train volunteers as necessary to ensure everyone is up to speed with useful info & H&S procedures



#hods26 Funding – a little can go a long way, look for sponsorship and foster favours

#hods26a Local printers can produce posters/ leaflets, a newspaper can publicise your events, a company may lend equipment for the day

#hods27 Be specific - sponsors are more likely to fund particular aspects of your event such as marketing/PR/re-enactors

#hods27a To download a sponsorship letter template from the HODs document library log onto your Organiser Portal



#hods28 Get networking! Connect with other local events or groups to pool resources and raise your profile

#hods29 Donations – Asking for voluntary donations can often raise more money than charging for services, e.g. refreshments

#hods30 Keep in touch - Think how you can keep visitors involved beyond the weekend as members, subscribers to your newsletter or volunteers for other projects and your next event

TOP TIPS: SHOUT ABOUT IT



#hods31 Capture people's attention with a snappy title and an intriguing description in your directory entry and press release



#hods32 Think about different audience groups and how you can reach them



#hods33 Agree within your organisation who will deal with the media and who's willing to give interviews

#hods34 Take photographs – a high quality image (at least 300dpi resolution) is invaluable in getting your story told



#hods35 Contact local newspapers/radio/tv – drip feed them information in the run up and straight after the event

#hods35a You can use our press release template which you can find in the Document Library of your Organiser Portal

#hods36 Think of different angles and exclusive stories for different media and journalists



#hods37 Don't fear initial set-backs, stay positive and enthusiastic

#hods38 Ask local groups, schools, companies if they could flag up your event in a meeting/news-letter or on noticeboards/websites/intranet



#hods39 Ask local libraries, shops, train stations, surgeries to display your posters/flyers/leaflets



#hods40 Take your story to the crowd – involve a town crier, take over an empty shop unit for displays

#hods41 Make the most of the nationally recognised brand: free logos, posters, balloons and design templates available for those registered



#hods41a Pink banners, posters, balloons, open signs are visible from afar and will catch the eye of the passer-by



#hods42 If you produce a local programme brochure make sure there's a pile at each site for visitors to pick up

#hods42a Have an accessible version available too, e.g. large print, html or "tagged" PDF



#hods43 If your programme is dispersed across a town, create an info hub in a busy/central area

#hods44 Ask your local paper to give you a couple of pages to list your events as an in-kind sponsorship

#hods45 Organise a media launch/photo call and invite your local MP, mayor, celebrity etc



#hods46 Think about linking in with anniversaries and other opportunities to create a theme, story or a new spin on an event





#hods47 Use social media to engage with your visitors before, over and after the event and connect with us

#hods48 Link up with other local events (e.g. food festivals/sports events) and piggyback on their publicity. Don't compete, collaborate

#hods49 Take photos during the event and capture people's enjoyment. Good for post-event coverage and next year's PR

#hods50 Don't underestimate the power of word-of-mouth. Happy visitors will be your best advertisement for next year!

FINALLY Have fun! And remember - enthusiastic volunteers and staff are the most valuable asset to an event. Feedback shows that they can turn an ordinary day into a really fantastic one!



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