



KENLEY REVIVAL PROJECT

Interpretation Plan

May 2015



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1 Introduction

1a Introduction

The vision for the Kenley Revival Project is as follows:

Kenley airfield and environs: conserved, promoted, understood and enjoyed as the UK's most complete surviving Battle of Britain fighter airfield, a site of nature conservation and public open space; an active airfield that maintains a direct and tangible link to its fighter airfield history.

In delivering this project the partners, Kenley Airfield Friends Group, City of London Corporation and Historic England will transform Kenley into an identifiable, high quality asset by creating opportunities for people to engage with Kenley's World War Two (WW2) heritage.

This plan sets out the project aims to interpret the site. To ensure consistency of approach across the project the partners have agreed to establish and work within a single Interpretation Strategy that creates a clear identity and narrative voice for the project.

The Interpretation Strategy has the following aims:

- To tie all the project's initiatives together.
- To assist the project's partners' in engaging local people with the project; creating a sense of pride, belonging and ownership.

1b The site

Kenley Common is a 56 hectare (139 acre) public open space located mainly in the London Borough of Croydon, with a small southern area in Tandridge District. Situated within the boundary of Kenley Common is Kenley Airfield, originally a World War One (WW1) fighter base that grew to become a vitally important airfield during the Battle of Britain in WW2.

Over time parts of Kenley Common have transferred between the City Corporation and the government (Air Ministry and Ministry of



Aerial photograph of Kenley. The red line marks the boundary of the common.

Defence) as Kenley Airfield has expanded and contracted in size. Today much of the former Battle of Britain era airfield has reverted back to Kenley Common, and with it many of the historic features associated with that period.

The remaining airfield is still owned by the Ministry of Defence and now hosts 615 Volunteer Gliding Squadron (615 VGS), a Royal Air Force squadron of the Air Cadet Organisation. The airfield's perimeter track marks the boundary between City Corporation land and that owned by MoD.

Whilst much of the historic airfield architecture has been lost, the site still has 11 fighter blast Pens (at least two of which have gun emplacements), a rifle range, interconnecting footpaths and assorted concrete hard standings associated with ancillary buildings such as blister hangers. The survival of these features has led to Kenley being described in the following way:

"RAF Kenley boasts the most complete fighter airfield associated with the Battle of Britain to have survived; this is a uniquely important survival and relates to a military action of world historic importance". Lake J, 2000: Thematic Survey of Military Aviation Sites and Structures Throughout Britain. London: Historic England.

There is also a memorial which was unveiled on 19 August 2000. Dedicated to the Royal Air Force and allied air forces, the inscription reads:

RAF Kenley Tribute In Honour Of All Personnel Who Served Here 1917–1959.

Though not in the ownership of either the MoD or City of London, the former Officers' Mess still stands and can be clearly seen from the airfield. To the north stands the Portcullis Club which is the meeting place for the Kenley & Caterham branch of the Royal Air Forces Association and which holds numerous artefacts and memorabilia associated with the airfield.

The completeness of the airfield makes this a site of national historical significance.

2 Key Messages

With such a wide ranging history that encompasses natural, cultural and military elements, it is necessary to distil Kenley's significance to some key messages that will underpin all interpretative communication across the project.

2a Kenley and the defence of London

During WW2 RAF Kenley was one of the three main fighter stations (Kenley, Croydon and Biggin Hill) responsible for the air defence of London. It was during the crucial days of the Battle of Britain that these three RAF stations came to prominence fighting off the might of the German Luftwaffe and thus preventing an invasion of Britain.

RAF Kenley suffered its worst damage in an attack on 18 August 1940 with the loss of nine lives. While 15 September is considered by many to be the climax of the Battle of Britain, 18 August is often cited as the costliest or hardest day — the British lost 68 aircraft and the Germans lost 69. At Kenley, three hangars and 10 aircraft, including six Hurricanes, were destroyed and the runways badly cratered. The Sector Operations Room had to be moved to an emergency location in Caterham away from the airfield. But Kenley was operational again the following day. Four of the attacking Dorniers were shot down (one crashing in Golf Road next to the airfield) another two crashed on landing back in France and the remaining three were badly damaged. Interpretation on the airfield must reflect the significance of the airfield in the Battle of Britain.

2b Nature

The site is of particular interest for its species rich chalk, neutral and acid grasslands. It is unusual in the fact that all these types of grassland occur within a fairly small area. These habitats support a

variety of warmth loving flowers and their dependent insects, including some nationally scarce plants such as adder's tongue, eyebright, dwarf thistle, autumn gentian and cowslip.

2c Recreation

People have always used Kenley Common for recreation and leisure. Prior to be commandeered by the Air Ministry in 1917, Kenley included a golf course and the building of the airfield required the filling in of a public pond. Now the site is well used for walking, bike riding and jogging.

2d Kenley: a living airfield

Interpretation will give visitors a sense of what it was like to live near, and work on, the airfield and the experience of being under attack.

3 Interpretive principles

3a The stories – a character led approach

It is through the stories of people who have lived near, worked at, used and enjoyed the site that the significance of the site comes to life.

There are lots of people in the story of Kenley – from the commoners who used it during medieval times to rear livestock and grow crops; Royal Air Force pilots and personnel; Rangers that maintain the site; through to local communities who continue to use the site for recreation.

The project will take people as the primary interpretive approach looking at the experiences of individuals or groups and using their experiences and stories to explain and explore the heritage of the site.

The possibilities of this site are very wide; it could include but not be limited to: anecdotes from RAF veterans and their relatives and local people who lived through the Battle of Britain, local residents and historical societies, other aviation interest groups and members of Surrey Hills Gliding Club. It could include famous people such as Winston Churchill who had flying lessons at Kenley. This approach can also be extended to include local experts such as Andrew Scott, ranger and local resident and Alan Morgan, Chair of Kenley Airfield Friends Group (KAFG).

Broadly these audiences can be split into two umbrella groups: those who will attend the site and those who will engage from a distance. The strategy will now consider how best to distil these messages and principles to both audiences.

4 Onsite interpretation

4a Current interpretation

Over the years KAFG and its members have worked hard to ensure that, in particular, visitors to the site can encounter and learn about Kenley's significance as an RAF airfield. This strategy seeks to build and enhance this work.

Led by KAFG with support from City of London staff, interpretation on site is delivered via guided walks, a heritage trail and interpretation boards.

Guided walks

KAFG volunteers at specific times in the year e.g. Kenley Heritage and Fun days and by special arrangement will take people on a tour of the site highlighting key structures such as the rifle range, the Tribute Memorial and a selection of fighter pens.

Heritage trail leaflets

Available to download from the City of London website and from dispensers on site the leaflets enable visitors to take self-guided tours of the airfield.

Interpretation boards

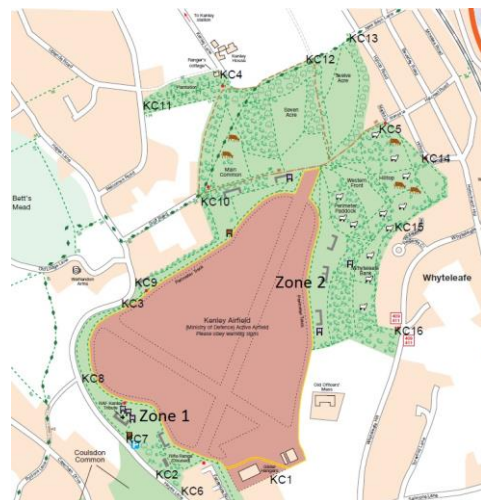
There are currently eight interpretation boards spread across the site. The boards cover a range of subjects including the history of Kenley Airfield, the Battle of Britain and Local Voices. From a visitor point of view these can feel a little disconnected and remote from each other which is not helped by the dispersed nature of the site's features.

4b New interpretation

The Conservation Management Plan makes it clear that one of the key objectives for interpretation should be to allow the visitor to quickly and easily understand the airfield and how it functioned. To achieve this the project will divide the site into two complementary "Zones of Interpretation" that will each provide a different emphasis.

Zone 1.

In line with the general principle of making the site more legible as an airfield, the CMP, unusually, has opened the possibility of restoring historic assets. This zone, located at the main public access to the site, would centre around a restored Tribute Pen, the Tribute Memorial and conserved rifle range. Restoration would include the reintroduction of the central "E" spine. The Tribute Memorial would have to be moved, and this in itself will provide an opportunity for further interpretation to explain the local community's role in its instigation.



Map showing location of the interpretation zones.

The presence of the tribute means that this zone would have a more contemplative feel where the visitor will be encouraged to reflect on the significance of the site and the loss of life. This zone will also focus on Kenley's history highlighting:

- The role of the airfield as an aircraft acceptance park during WW1
- The change in thinking about the air defence of the UK prompted by the bombing of Dover in 1915 and other raids by German aircraft including Zeppelins, which prompted Winston Churchill to fight to retain the airfield for military use after WW1.
- What the site looked like before being transformed into an airfield and local responses to that transformation.

Zone 2

Centred around the best preserved fighter pen on the eastern side of the airfield, this zone, uniquely, has three pens quite close together as well as the Fuel Dump. The former Officers' Mess, whilst outside the scope of the project, is also clearly visible from this zone opening the possibility of including it in any interpretation.

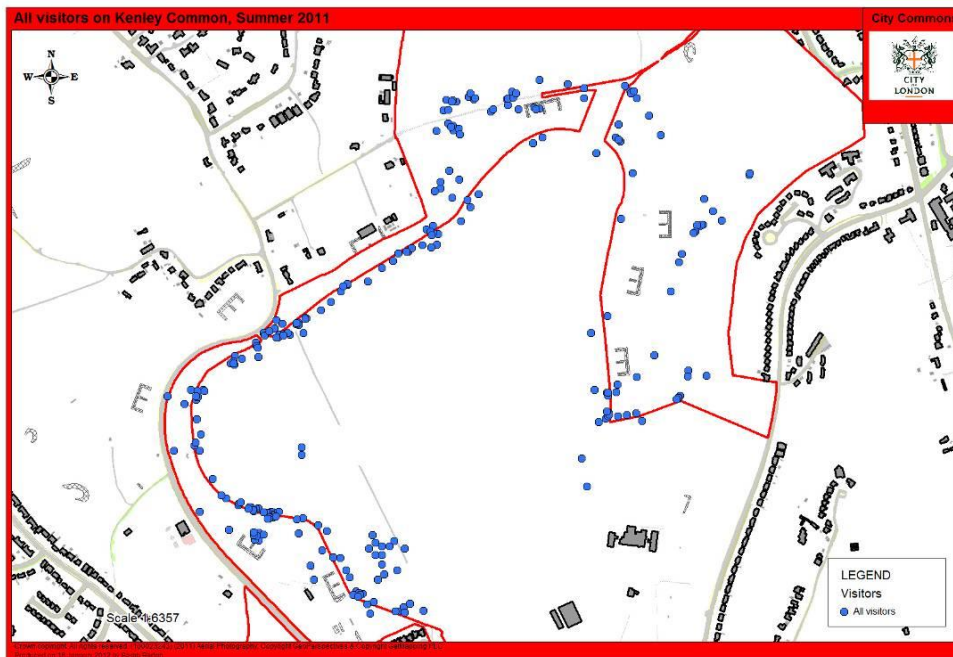
Additionally this area of the airfield is clearly visible from the existing "viewing gallery" at in the SW corner. Visitors standing there and looking back across the airfield would get a good view of what the airfield might have looked like. This Zone will make the most of this by focusing on what life on a working airfield might have been like and the nuances of the site's architecture and layout.



KC44 The most intact Fighter Pen

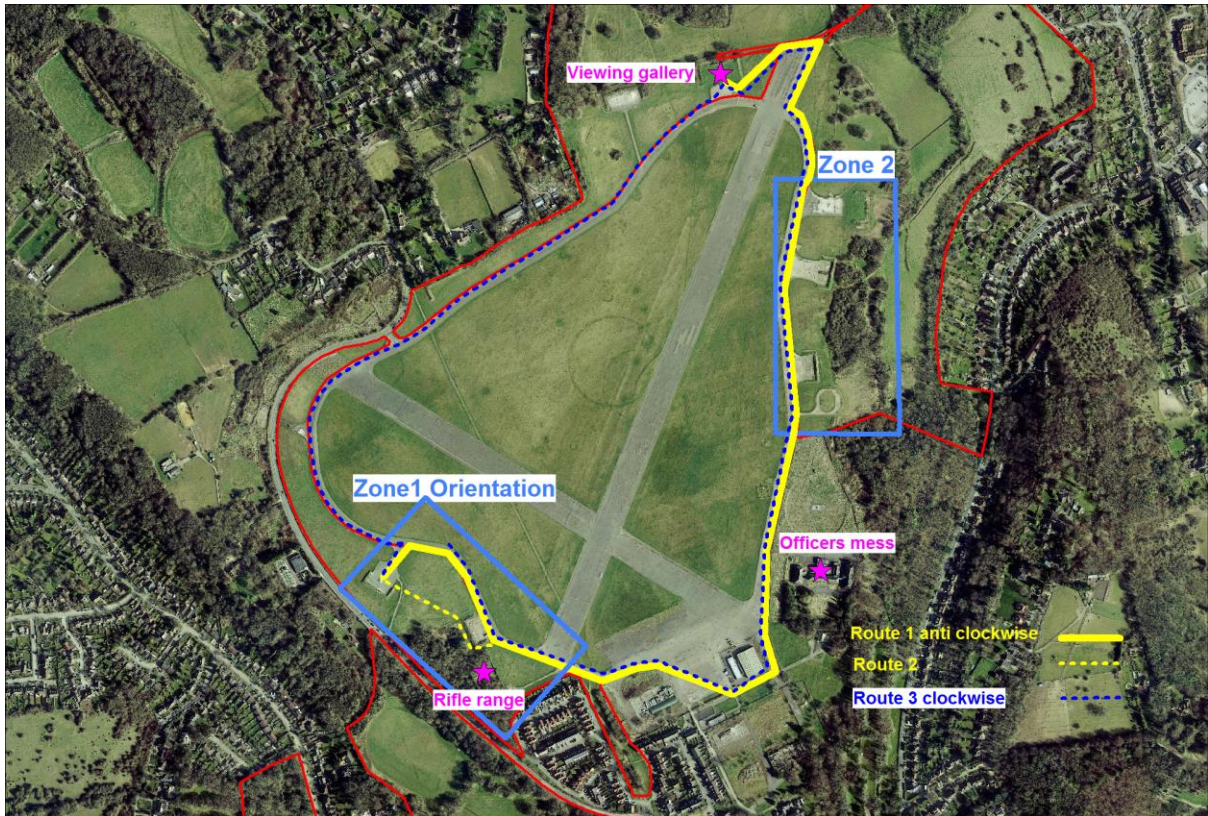
Using existing visitor flow

The 2011 visitor survey identified that there are 129,000 visits to Kenley a year. This observational survey found that the majority of visitors stick to the perimeter track, with definite clustering around the area of the Tribute Memorial (Zone 1), western edge and the area of the Fuel Dump (Zone 2).



Areas where visitors were recorded during the 2011 Visitor Survey

This Plan proposes to use these existing visitor flow preferences to guide people around and between the zones of interpretation using one of three way-marked routes in the following way.



Visitor flow - routes

Route 1 provides visitors with the most direct way to transit between Zone 1 and 2.

Route 2 provides a return loop to create a short circular route around Zone 1 only. This route might be preferred by those with limited mobility or time.

Route 3 takes advantage of many peoples preference to walk along the western part of the perimeter track and then go on to complete a circle around the entire airfield.

The red line shows the boundary of the City of London Corporation's land holding.

Connecting the Zones



Sailor Malan, famous RAF pilot could be one of the characters to "lead" trails around the site.

The zones of interpretation are separated by a 0.5 mile walk so visitors will need to be encouraged to make the journey between the two. In addition to providing way-finding posts strategically placed along the route, visitors will be encouraged to follow character-led trails where visitors will be introduced to a character e.g. an Airfield Medic whose story will then lead them through the site taking them past areas that were important in their day-to-day roles on the site, with the trail eventually ending in Zone 2.

Whilst it will be possible to follow a trail from any of the site entrances, it is expected that most visitors will enter from Zone 1 and trails will take the visitor on more scenic routes or shorter more direct trips with the estimated walking time being clearly marked on trail guides and at decision making points along the walk.

This work will see an uplift in the number of interpretation signs, raising the number from 8 to 58, with the introduction of up to 50 new signs. These new signs will both improve the level of interpretation and will better reflect the site’s varied history and significance. They will improve the welcome and enable visitors to better orientate themselves with the introduction of maps showing points of interest. There will be eight new welcome signs complemented by five new landmark identification signs that will identify the key assets on site such as the rifle range and the Tribute Pen. They will also signal the points in the journey where visitors cross from City of London land onto MoD land and back again.

There will also be 15 new table top interpretation signs that will provide detail information on the site, its history, remaining assets and identifying where key structures stood.



New laser cut welcome sign 2.3m by 900mm.



New laser cut landmark sign 1.5m by 500mm.



New table top interpretation sign.



New way-finding post.

On-site Interactivity

There is no interactivity currently on the site. To give people the best possible experience ways should be found to engage more of the visitor’s senses, particularly sound using “sound posts”. Consideration should also be given on how best to animate the blast pens; create the sense of what it would have been like to be crowded into a blast pen during a Luftwaffe raid.



Example of an interactive sound post.

Events and Activities

In addition to increasing the scale and quality of interpretation on-site, the Kenley Revival Project will also deliver a diverse range of innovative events. These new events are detailed in the Activity Plan.

5 Offsite interpretation

For audiences who may not be able to visit the site, the project will deliver an engaging and informative off-site offer.

5a Online

Currently there is no single or central website that supports the site. Information on the site is split across the City of London and the Kenley Airfield Friends Group websites. Between the two users can learn a little bit more about Kenley's history as well as practical information to support visits, like how to get there. However, the two sites are very much separate and there is no clear linking between two, and at present no clear logic about the way information between the sites is split. As things currently stand there are no interactive opportunities for online visitors; the online experience can best be described as passive.

To change this, a new website would have eight aims:

1. Promote the Kenley Revival Project: raise awareness of the project and the works to conserve and interpret the airfield.
2. Improve users' understanding of the significance of the airfield and the role Kenley played in the defence of London.
3. Provide a central hub for amateur and professional historians looking for Kenley Airfield material.
4. Improve understanding of Kenley's rich natural heritage.
5. Enable web users to plan a trip to the common.
6. Enable web users to upload and share images/material relating to Kenley and creating their own galleries.
7. Promote events and activities on the airfield.
8. Support teachers using Kenley Revival Project resources in the classroom.

The website is expected to be the first point of call for anyone seeking to research and learn more about the airfield and its significance. Much of the material relating to Kenley is spread across a range of different organisations or in private hands – the website should act as a central point for accessing all available information. Accordingly web users should be able to:

Search a database of Kenley Airfield related material

A team of volunteers will, as part of the project, identify public places e.g. museums, archives or pubs, and record the material type, short descriptions of the object and where it can be found. This information will then be entered onto a searchable database that will enable web users to find out where material can be found, where it is and how it can accessed e.g. 1941, Aerial Photo; held at RAF Museum Hendon; viewable by appointment only; Opening Times 1000-1800; contact using link <http://www.rafmuseum.org.uk/contact-us/enquiry-form.aspx>. (The Kenley website should take you straight to a web form or provide a number as appropriate).

Website – other features

In addition to the above, users should also be able to:

- Subscribe to KAFG and their newsletter

- Follow the project on social media channels e.g. Twitter; Facebook and YouTube.
- Respond to blogs through comments.
- Download resources

5b Touring exhibition

The site is reasonably close to a number of local museums most notably East Surrey Museum, only 20 mins away on local buses, and Croydon Museum. Additionally there are organisations within the surrounding boroughs such as Croydon Airport Society who will have a natural interest in the project but who may find it difficult to visit the site. The touring exhibition could go to these sites as a vehicle for carrying messages about the significance of the airfield, as well as promoting the site and encouraging increased heritage footfall.

Further afield the touring exhibition would be the main physical/tactile experience for visitors for whom a trip to Kenley would be too difficult to manage particularly on public transport. A good example of this is Broadwater Farm in Haringey, over 22 miles away in North London. Too far to reasonably expect local community to visit the site – but the connections to the site are real and likely to generate interest. In addition to this a good quality touring exhibition would be of interest to local libraries across London.

Based largely on graphic representations of the site, aircraft and service crew, the touring exhibition should include hands-on learning opportunities that can be explored by school groups and formal learning visits. The exhibition should allow visitors to explore the oral histories collected as part of the project.

The Volunteer research team, supported by project staff, are expected to be central to the development of the exhibition. Their research and ideas will ultimately drive the exhibition and the story being told.

The exhibition should be built as a series of modular, self-contained, story islands to ensure greatest possible flexibility. The exhibition will need to work equally well in a space where the entrance and exit for the exhibition are the same point as well as venues where visitors may be asked to walk through separate entrances and exits (see figure 1). Additionally the exhibition will need to work equally well in venues where the exhibition may need to be spread through two or more rooms.

Story Islands: individual interpretation modules

Each story island will work as a stand-alone module allowing visitors to hop back and forth in time rather than follow a linear sequence. Modules should be double sided. All story islands will comprise five main elements:

- Graphic window - a large backdrop photograph or illustration that draws visitors in.
- Title - a framing evocative title supported by a provocative question or statement.
- Display items – likely to be a graphic representation but may include, on occasion, objects.
- 1 text panel on front.
- 1 text panel on rear.

Use of multimedia

In addition to traditional text and image based story islands, additional types of interpretation should be used at each module to vary the experience for visitors. Varied interpretation will ensure wider audience appeal and help encourage visitors to visit the whole exhibition. Audio or digital material could be either embedded within the module or delivered through standalone portable screens.

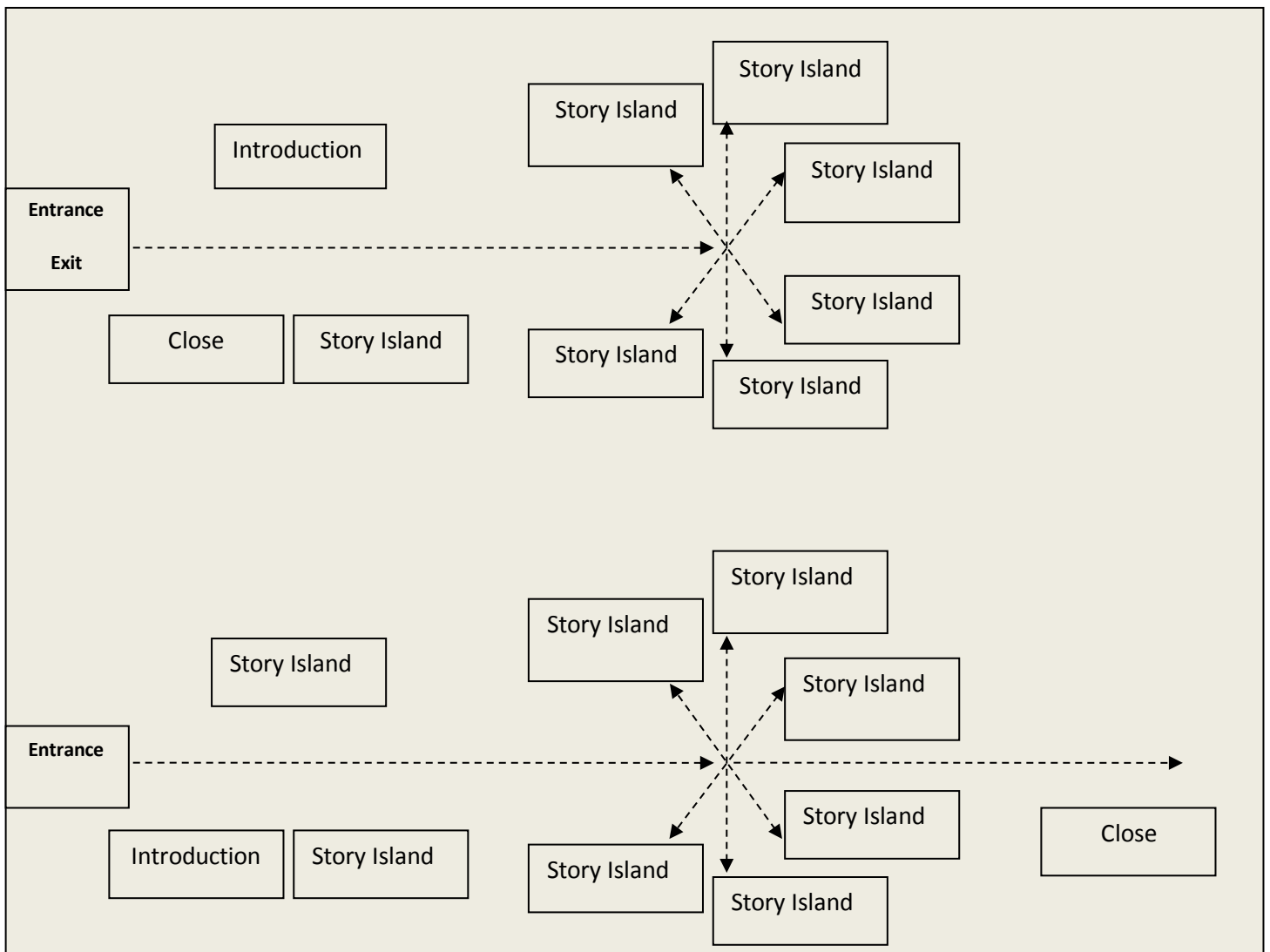
Examples of possible audio/video content:

- Poems inspired by World War 2 – perhaps read by local (to where the exhibition is) school children/veterans.
- Letters exchanged between service personnel and their families.
- Oral history recordings.

Text Hierarchy

Not all visitors to an exhibition want to walk round and respond to text in the same way. Some people like to take their time and carefully read and consider all the information available, others like to speed around and will not read beyond a certain level of text. Others will be somewhere in between. Irrespective of how the visitor likes to consume an exhibition, it is vital that they have as similar an experience as possible and are able to leave with the same basic information if not the same level of detail. To ensure this the touring exhibition should follow the text hierarchy guidelines:

1. Top Level	Section titles – lets the reader know broad area or question being answered
2. Second Level	First Paragraph – give a short punchy answer
3. Third level	Text panel expanded knowledge of subject.
4. Fourth level	Focused information on a carefully selected detail.



5c Loan boxes

Creation, in consultation with Primary, Secondary and special educational needs teachers, of two types of themed loan box representing:

- (1) Nature
- (2) World Wars

The boxes will provide handling objects (genuine artefacts and/or reproductions) and physical props, dressing-up items, CDs and DVDs containing audio/visual material (including oral history interviews), copies of archive documents, contemporary media reports and ephemera, and a teacher's pack of printed resources (including notes, worksheets, activity suggestions and lesson plans).

Boxes would be loaned free of charge to schools.

6 Appendices

The following costs are primarily derived for the Premm Design document appended to this plan. The signage suite will be a mixture of their 'Blue Sky' option and standard option as detailed below.

Sign costs

	Quantity	Cost	Total
Interactive signs (separate quote obtained)	5	£8,500	£42,500
Laser cut steel, double sided, with styling, powdercoated graphics and inset area with customer graphics reverse mounted on clear acrylic. 2.3m high x 900 wide with digitally printed vinyl mounted to 8mm clear cast acrylic. (Blue Sky)	8	£3,335	£26,680
Laser cut steel, double sided, with styling, powdercoated graphics and inset area with customer graphics reverse mounted on clear acrylic. 1.5m high x 500 wide with digitally printed vinyl reverse mounted to 8mm clear cast acrylic. (Blue Sky)	5	£2,300	£11,500
Table top Signs (following wing style) approx 1600 x 700 with digitally printed vinyl mounted to 8mm clear cast acrylic. (Standard)	15	£800	£12,000
Way finding posts either in brushed finish or powder coated to match other signage. (Standard)	17	£195	£3,315
Total fabrication cost	50		£95,995
Replacement graphics in year 3	5	£311	£1,555
Illustrations	6	£1,468	£8,808
Design			£4,500
Total sign costs			£110,858