

## Harnessing the power of storytelling to support the creative industries

An international partnership is combining traditional storytelling with modern technologies to support the creative industries through an interdisciplinary project worth €1million.

The two-year 'StoryTagging' project will develop a website and both Android and Apple mobile apps that will offer a platform for creative practitioners to market and sell their products. The aim is to increase the visibility of small businesses working in remote northern areas and give them greater access to international markets, while drawing on and supporting long traditions of storytelling in northern locales.

Project Manager Elsa Cox said: "The StoryTagging project is exciting as it brings the opportunity to enhance market reach by imbuing creative products with stories. Such stories bring large numbers of visitors to the regions annually, keen to experience the landscape and local culture for themselves.

"Creative SME's across the project area face economic challenges due to location, distance to market and even lack of internet connection. With the potential to make it easier to do business sustainably in remote regions, the StoryTagging project has a great deal to offer local communities."

Managed by Robert Gordon University in Scotland, StoryTagging is an international project co-funded by the Northern Periphery and Arctic Programme of the European Union. It draws on the experience and expertise of a range of international partners: Robert Gordon University and the University of the Highlands and Islands in Scotland, Causeway Coast and Glens Heritage Trust and Ulster University in Northern Ireland, Kenozero National Park in Russia, Region Västerbotten in Sweden, and Kvarken Council, a cross-border cooperation association for the Gulf of Bothnia region, based in Finland. Project partners will also work closely with tourism, creative industry and business support organisations in each country.

One activity will involve gathering stories that reflect the distinct culture of northern regions. Each partner country will contribute up to 30 stories, to be presented on the website and apps in a range of multimedia formats. These will celebrate the history and heritage, language, archaeology, landscape and folklore that make northern communities unique. Project partners will then invite creative practitioners in each country to apply for a small grant, allowing them to create a new product or work inspired by these stories.

An innovative digital platform, to be released under the brand name 'Northword', will be developed to bank these stories and to market and sell the products: a resource that will benefit local communities as well as enhance the experience of visitors discovering new regions through their stories. The Northword platform will continue to benefit northern communities well beyond the life of the project. Participating businesses will also be provided with tools and training materials to increase their digital marketing skills and allow them to keep using and developing the platform after the project ends.