

RGU secures €1million research project to preserve cultural heritage through storytelling

Robert Gordon University (RGU) is harnessing the power of storytelling to support the creative industries in Northern countries through an interdisciplinary project worth €1million.

The two-year 'StoryTagging' project, led by Professor David Gray of RGU, will see the development of an innovative digital platform to enhance market reach of small and medium enterprises (SME), while supporting the creation of new creative products by showcasing stories that celebrate the natural and cultural heritage of Northern Communities and working with the creative industries to bring those stories to life through new products or works.

Managed by RGU Orkney, StoryTagging' is an international project funded in part by the Northern Periphery and Arctic (NPA) Programme of the European Union. It combines the expertise from RGU's School of Creative and Cultural Business, Computing Science and Digital Media and Gray's School of Art together with the University of the Highlands and Islands and international partners from Northern Ireland, Finland, Sweden and Russia.



Elsa Cox, RGU's Orkney Development Manager, said: "Orkney shares a strong history of storytelling with the project regions as demonstrated by local folklore, music, art and an annual Storytelling Festival. The StoryTagging project is exciting as it brings the opportunity to enhance market reach by imbuing creative products with those stories. Such stories bring large numbers of visitors to the islands annually, keen to experience the landscape and local culture for themselves.

"Creative SME's in the North of Scotland face similar economic challenges to those based across the project area 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 locally."



One of the central activities will involve developing an integrated digital platform to host stories, trails, movies and information about locations and events in a wide range of multimedia formats. It will collect up to 30 stories in each partner country which celebrate language, dialect and culture, economic heritage, traditions, history, folklore, landscape and archaeology. Project partners will collaborate with SMEs in each country to bring stories to life through new products or works, which will then be mapped via the platform.

The project supports RGU's commitment to engage in strategic partnerships and stimulate economic development through working with organisations to enhance skills and develop new products and services.

Professor Paul Hagan, Vice Principal for Research at RGU, adds: "Universities play a key role in supporting the creative industries, particularly now when the current economic environment poses a great threat to their survival. We are pleased to be collaborating with our international partners to

ensure that the rich cultural and natural heritage of the region is captured through our technological expertise and innovation.

“This project once again highlights RGU’s commitment to interdisciplinary research and capitalises on our strengths to find effective solutions to some of the challenges experienced by communities in the Highlands and Islands.”

Importantly, StoryTagging builds on the Orkney-based Trails to Tales pilot project which saw the creation of the Orkney Folklore Trail App. Developed in collaboration with local storytellers, musicians and illustrators, the app shares stories as part of a trail encouraging engagement with the landscape and distribution of visitors to ease pressure on World Heritage sites. Responding directly to an opportunity identified by the local community, this project has greatly influenced StoryTagging, which will continue to benefit storytellers, heritage organisations and creative SMEs in the region.

