Regenerative Tourism Storytelling Toolkit

Who this toolkit is aimed at:

Brecks businesses and LVEP (transferable to other parts of the region)

There are many engaging stories to tell in the [Brecks] and this toolkit will give you some tips on using storytelling in your websites, social media, brochures, booking information, blogs and visitor communications. This will help you to convey what makes your place special and communicate, honestly and specifically, how your work relates to people, place and nature, including what is already happening and what is still developing. Narratives are an engaging and adaptable means of showing who you are and what you do.

The aim is not simply to tell visitors what you offer, but to help them understand:

Why this place matters, who cares for it, what makes it distinctive, and how visitors can contribute to its future.

Brecks businesses and organisations already hold rich stories, knowledge and experience. This toolkit offers prompts for gathering and communicating them. Use, adapt or skip sections according to what is useful for your organisation.

A Brecks story lens

A strong Brecks story helps people notice what is easily missed: the small, slow, seasonal and layered qualities of the place, and the people, skills, relationships and acts of care that sustain them.

What is hidden in plain sight?

What time, season or slower pace helps reveal it?

What human and ecological relationship have shaped it?

What care or labour usually remains invisible?

What should visitors notice, understand or do differently?

Is there anything the story should help protect?

1. Start with your story

Before writing anything, ask:

Our place

What makes our place and the Brecks distinctive?

_____

What are visitors unlikely to find elsewhere?

_____

What landscape, heritage, culture or nature surrounds us?

_____

What stories are associated with this place?

_____

What is hidden, seasonal, slow or easily missed?

_____

What time of day, season or slower pace helps reveal it?

_____

What care, work or relationship helps sustain this place?

_____

Is there anything fragile or sensitive that the story should help protect?

_____

Our people

Who are the people behind our business?

_____

What knowledge, skills or traditions do we draw upon?

_____

Are there local people whose stories or knowledge we can share, with their permission?

_____

Our purpose

Why does our business exist?

_____

What do we care about?

_____

What are we trying to Protect, Restore, Create or Change?

_____

What matters enough that we would not trade it away?

_____

Our future

What would we like this place to look and feel like in 10 or 20 years?

_____

How does our business contribute to that future?

_____

What would we like to hand on to the next generation?

_____

Story starter:

“We are here because…”

_____

_____

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2. Use the "PLACE – PEOPLE – PURPOSE – PROGRESS " story

An adaptable structure for almost any piece of content.

Place

Tell people about the place.

What can visitors see, hear, smell, experience or discover?

"Our site sits on the edge of…"

People

Introduce the people connected to it.

Who lives, works or cares for this place?

"For three generations, our family has…"

Purpose

Explain why it matters.

What are you trying to protect, restore, celebrate or change?

"Today, we are working to…"

The same offer can be given more local context, for example:

"We offer guided walks through the local countryside."

into:

"Our guided walks explore the landscape that has shaped this community for generations. Along the way, we share stories of the people who have worked this land and explain how we are working with local partners to restore habitats and encourage visitors to experience the landscape responsibly."

Progress

Regeneration is an evolving practice rather than a finished claim. Ask these questions: "What has changed so far? What are we still working towards? What have we learned? What comes next?"

3. Find your "story bank"

Brecks businesses already hold a rich bank of stories. This exercise can help gather them in one place and consider what each story might help visitors understand.

The table below offers one way to gather them.

Story	**What happened?**	**Why does it matter?**	**What should visitors notice, understand or do differently?**
A local person			
A landscape feature			
A traditional skill			
Wildlife encounter			
Conservation project			
Local producer			
Challenge we faced			
Something we changed			
Visitor experience			
Future ambition			

Good regenerative tourism stories can be:

- the old tree you are trying to protect
- the local producer you buy from
- the species returning to your land
- an old recipe
- a traditional craft
- a local person who taught you something
- a change you made to reduce your impact
- a community project you support
- a place visitors often walk past without noticing
- a skill being passed on
- workforce or community wellbeing
- a thriving relationship between local food, farming, people and landscape

4. Tell the story behind the experience

Instead of simply describing what visitors do, explain why it matters.

Short offer description:

"Enjoy a two-hour guided foraging tour."

Place-rich description:

"Our two-hour woodland foraging tour follows paths that local people have used for generations. You will learn about responsible harvesting, native plants, food traditions, biodiversity and the history of sustainable natural resources in the Brecks."

Think about:

WHAT should visitors notice and do

WHERE they are

WHO/WHAT is connected to it

WHY it matters

HOW is care supported

5. Turn facts into stories

A useful exercise is to take a factual statement and ask "So what?"

Fact: "We planted 500 native trees."

Ask why? "To restore woodland".

Why does that matter? "It provides habitat and improves biodiversity".

Who is involved? "Local volunteers and a community group".

What happens next? "Visitors can see how the woodland changes over time".

Story: "Last winter, local volunteers helped us plant 500 native trees. The new woodland is part of our longer-term work to restore habitat and increase biodiversity. Visitors can follow the progress of the planting and see how the landscape changes over time."

Think about "What was difficult?", "What did we learn?" and "What remains to be done?" This supports honest storytelling about progress rather than polished success stories.

6. Make regeneration visible

Don't simply use words such as "sustainable", "eco-friendly" or "regenerative".

Describe what is happening, what it supports and what remains in progress.

Instead of:

“We are committed to regenerative tourism.”

Try:

“We work with local farmers to source…”

“We have restored…”

“Visitors can contribute by…”

“The income from this experience helps fund…”

“We employ local guides who…”

“We work with the community to…”

The principle is:

Be specific, honest and proportionate

7. Invite visitors into an appropriate role

Regenerative tourism storytelling should not position visitors simply as consumers. Visitors may be observers, learners, witnesses, recorders or contributors.

Ask: How can visitors become part of the story?

They might:

- buy from a local producer
- choose a local guide
- participate in conservation or citizen science
- learn about local heritage
- use public transport or lower-impact travel options where these are available and practical
- follow a responsible visitor trail
- contribute to a community project
- respect sensitive habitats
- share local stories
- return and see how a project has developed

Not every contribution needs to be hands-on. Sometimes care means slowing down, keeping to a route, visiting at a more appropriate time, supporting local work indirectly, or accepting that a sensitive place should not receive more visitors.

Storytelling prompt

“When you visit us, you can help by…”

_____

_____

Additional question: Can people participate in different ways according to their abilities, resources and interests?

8. Build a story into your website

A simple website structure:

Our Place - Where are we and what makes it special?
Our Story - How did the business begin?
Our Purpose - What do we care about?
Our Actions - What are we actually doing?
Our Partners - Who do we work with locally?
Your Visit - How can visitors experience and contribute to the place?
Our Progress: What are we learning and what comes next?

This structure can sit alongside essential practical and booking information, adding context about why the work matters.

9. Social media storytelling

A varied content mix can balance promotion with story, action and invitation.

Try a simple 3-part mix:

STORY - Tell people something interesting.

“Did you know that…”

ACTION - Show what you are doing.

“This week we've been…”

INVITATION - Give visitors a way to experience or support it. The invitation may be to notice, learn, reflect or respect a limit, not necessarily to visit, buy or participate.

“When you visit, look out for…”

Example:

Story:

“This old stone wall is over 100 years old…”

Action:

“We are working with local volunteers to repair sections using traditional techniques…”

Invitation:

“On your next visit, follow the footpath and see how the restoration is progressing.”

10. Use different storytelling formats

One story can become several pieces of content.

One local conservation project could become:

Instagram post
30-second video
Website story
Visitor newsletter
Short audio story
Before and after photographs
Interpretation panel
Guided tour story
Menu information
Guest bedroom/accommodation information pack

Include accessible formats and practices, such as captions, alt text, transcripts, audio, printed information and plain-language alternatives.

Content recycling prompt:

What story could we tell this week?

Then ask:

Could we tell it as a photo, video, short post, longer story or visitor experience?

11. A storytelling sense-check

Before publishing content, ask:

Aspect	Question	Reflection
Place	Does this tell us something about the place?	
People	Does it recognise people, communities or local knowledge?	
Purpose	Does it explain why the story matters?	
Action	Does it show something the business is actually doing?	
Visitor	Does it help visitors understand or experience the place differently?	
Authenticity	Is the story truthful and based on real experience?	
Respect	Have we obtained permission where someone's story, knowledge, image or cultural heritage is involved?	
Regeneration	Does it describe a specific and evidenced contribution or intention, including anything still in progress?	
Sensitivity and limits	Could this story reveal a sensitive location, increase pressure on a habitat or place, or affect someone negatively?	
Inclusion	Is the language and format accessible, and is the invitation realistic for different visitors?	
Fairness and recognition	Does the story recognise the people who contributed and consider who benefits from it?	

Golden rule

The strongest stories are usually those already present in the place, people and everyday work of the organisation. Tell them specifically and honestly, recognise those who contributed, and obtain permission where appropriate.

And finally – along with all of your authentic and engaging stories, some visitors enjoy seeing a place through a literary or film lens so it might be useful to research any media links that your place may have. You many not wish to put these centre stage but they can be a useful alternative story to tell. The following resources have some ideas that you might be able to incorporate.

Literary Norfolk - The Brecks

Literary Norfolk - Film Locations