# Altogether Archaeology gets the green light

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A pilot phase of the community archaeology project was launched two years ago and attracted volunteers from all over the North Pennines and further afield. The volunteers, aged from 8 to 80, discovered how to use a range of archaeological fieldwork techniques while undertaking important research that has contributed to the understanding of the way people have lived in the North Pennines over the past 10,000 years.

Now the work is set to continue with the news that the HLF is to fund a further three years' work.

Jon Charlton, the AONB Partnership's Programme Development Manager, was delighted at the news: "The volunteers have been magnificent and they deserve this chance to put their developing archaeological skills to further use. We have a draft programme that involves working with universities and archaeological contractors to provide further training while also undertaking exciting new research. We will also be very pleased to hear from any potential new volunteers – no experience is needed, just lots of enthusiasm to find out about the lives of our ancestors over the past 10,000 years."

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "By delving into the history of the North Pennines, the Altogether Archaeology volunteers will not only expand their knowledge and learn lots of valuable skills, but also provide a unique record of the area for others to learn about, enjoy and be inspired by. We are really looking forward to seeing the results."

The pilot phase involved excavation work at the 13th-century Muggleswick Grange in County Durham, and Westgate Castle which had been the Bishop of Durham's medieval hunting lodge but was lost under hundreds of years of soil and rubble.

The volunteers also completed a landscape survey of Holwick in Upper Teesdale, and the excavation of a prehistoric rock art site near Hallbankgate, and a Bronze Age cemetery on Appleby Golf Course. A further module saw the excavation of part of the Maiden Way Roman Road near Epiacum (Whitley Castle) Roman fort, Alston. The volunteers also completed a 'molehill survey' at Epiacum, resulting in many fascinating finds including a bronze dolphin (probably a handle of a razor), glass beads, pottery fragments and iron nails, all of which contribute to our understanding of the site. All this work was done under close professional supervision, with full training provided to all volunteers.

The draft programme for the next phase is based around 10 modules, including:

- early farmers - studying the ways of life of the first farmers between 4,000 and 2,000BC
- the Maiden Way Roman Road - examining the road and various ancient sites along its route
- the missing centuries - life in the North Pennines after the Romans and before the Norman Conquest
- Hexhamshire and the Allen Valleys - recording these extensive landscapes that have never previously been surveyed by archaeologists

A ‘virtual museum’ for the North Pennines - making illustrated records of hundreds of ancient objects from the North Pennines available online.

Jon added: “The potential for exciting new discoveries is huge, and this genuinely is an opportunity for local people to come along and make such discoveries for themselves. In addition to the fieldwork, which always includes ‘on the job’ training’, there will be workshops in a range of archaeological techniques including landscape survey, geophysical survey, excavation, historic building survey, aerial photography, and documentary research.”

The AONB Partnership, as part of the Altogether Archaeology project, will also be arranging many events for school groups, families, and others to learn about and celebrate the archaeological heritage of the North Pennines. Details of these will be posted on the AONB Partnership’s website in due course.

**Notes to editors**

The North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is one of the finest landscapes in the country. It was designated in 1988 and at almost 2,000 sq. kilometres it is the second largest of the 46 AONBs (in England, Wales and Northern Ireland) and is one of the most peaceful and unspoilt places in England. The purpose of designation is the conservation and enhancement of natural beauty. It lies between the National Parks of the Lake District, the Yorkshire Dales, and Northumberland with the urban centres of County Durham away to the east. The AONB lies within the boundaries of five local authorities; the three counties of Cumbria, Durham and Northumberland, Carlisle City Council and Eden District Council.

The North Pennines AONB Partnership is a strategic alliance of 25 public, statutory and voluntary sector bodies with an interest in the future of the AONB. The work of the Partnership is carried out by its Staff Unit. The Staff Unit takes action to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the area, to raise awareness of its special qualities and to improve the quality of life for local people.;

**European and Global Geopark -**The North Pennines AONB became Britain’s first European Geopark in 2003. In 2004 the AONB became a founding member of the Global Geoparks Network. European and Global Geoparks are supported by UNESCO.

**Further information**

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