Are you Scotland's next all-weather eco-surveyor?

11/01/2011

The Scottish Wildlife Trust will soon call for applications for an exclusive training programme set to turn 10 promising environmentalists into the ecological surveyors of Scotland's future, it was announced today (15 Dec).

Thanks to project funding provided under their Skills for the Future programme, the Heritage Lottery Fund is making a £398,000 investment in Scotland's future environment which will see the Scottish Wildlife Trust provide 10 full-time 18-month training placements, including an annual bursary of £12,500, set to run between April 2011 and October 2012.

The course, which will include outdoor training across Scotland, is open to anyone with a commitment to a career in ecological surveying. The training is expected to provide a sustainable future for the individuals, who will receive on the job training, experience and skills to even start their own business, as well as providing sustainable outcomes for Scotland's environment.

Eric Coull, Scottish Wildlife Trust's Head of Conservation Teams, explained: "This scheme holds potential benefits for Scotland's wider environment as well as the individuals lucky enough to secure a training place. While completing their training, our candidates could discover new species on protected and unprotected sites, record the effects of climate change on species and biodiversity loss, determine how the Scottish Wildlife Trust might better manage our reserves, and ensure new developments respect natural heritage.

"This is a highly practical, field-based course, designed to provide enthusiastic environmentalists with the ecological and surveying skills necessary to fill a growing gap in the environmental jobs market. Our trainees will spend time with our conservation and reserve staff across Scotland. This will include collecting valuable data to help us make better decisions in the future while learning to survey the quality of the special places and landscapes which we are committed to conserve.

"Under the Nature Conservation (Scotland) 2004 Act planning authorities have a biodiversity 'duty' to consider the environmental impacts of proposed developments, which means that more companies and local authorities require ecological surveyors to provide consultation services. The individuals we train under this programme will have the skills to go on to play a vital role in shaping Scotland's landscape in years to come for the benefit of future generations as well as our wildlife.

"The Scottish Wildlife Trust, thanks to support to the sum of £358,400 from the Heritage Lottery Fund and our members – who helped us raise an additional £31,311 to make the programme possible, is delighted to play such a pivotal role in the provision of this important training for Scotland's future."

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: "Skills are a critical element in seeing the country through this downturn and the recovery that will follow. People have to have the skills that employers want in order to secure a job. These placements will help do just that by equipping trainees for the future environmental jobs market. Their newly-learned heritage skills will make a difference to their own lives as well as to the future landscape of Scotland. HLF has been surprised by the popularity of our Skills for the Future programme. There is clearly a great desire for training in the heritage sector."

Notes to editors

The Scottish Wildlife Trust is the largest voluntary body working for all the wildlife of Scotland, representing more than 35,000 members who care for wildlife and the environment. The Scottish Wildlife Trust seeks to raise public awareness of threatened habitats and species and manages over 120 reserves Scotland-wide.

The Scottish Wildlife Trust receives financial assistance and support from a range of organisations, funders and individuals including Scottish Natural Heritage and People's Postcode Lottery. www.swt.org.uk

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. To date it has invested over £500million in Scotland's heritage.

Further information

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