

Trainee at work at Blyth Tall Ship project

The project aims to create a unique East Coast ‘hands on’ maritime heritage visitor experience, and develop a centre of excellence for heritage marine engineering skills to NVQ level 3. The project will also carry out research to bring to life the lost story of the discovery of the Antarctic Landmass from Blyth in 1819 by Captain William Smith and includes the purchase and restoration of a tall ship.

Development funding of £99,700 has also been awarded to help Blyth Tall Ship progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

The project aims to train 100 young people over three years through restoring three iconic sailing vessels. Four of the young people involved will achieve NVQ level 3 in marine engineering through formal apprenticeships. The quayside location at South Harbour Blyth will be open to the public with a museum, boats on display, restoration work in progress and a schools programme.

Volunteers will carry out essential conservation work on boats with supervision and training from expert craftsmen. A new training and accreditation scheme will be developed with the team at Woodhorn Museum and Northumberland Archives, to support volunteers in the digitisation of the Port of Blyth’s archive collection. This collection will be published through a web portal, allowing on-line public access for the first time. Volunteers will also research and develop museum displays around the early ship building and Antarctic heritage of Blyth. The discovery of the Antarctic from Blyth in 1819 by Captain William Smith in the Brig Williams is a little known event but one of global significance.

Uncovering this lost heritage needs a ‘hands on’ experiential approach as documentary evidence is limited and traditional ship building skills are in very short supply.

Clive Gray, Chief Executive of Blyth Tall Ship said ‘We are delighted and grateful to the HLF. The opportunity to restore and have a tall ship in Blyth as a centrepiece of a working boat yard, training centre and museum, that brings the era of early ship building and global discovery alive, will be transformational for the many thousands who will visit and be involved."

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: “This important project will bring the story of ship building in the North East to life for visitors and the local community. It will create a first class heritage skill training centre that will not only teach people practical heritage skills but will also ensure the survival of an historic ship. We’re looking forward to seeing these exciting plans progress over the coming months.”

Ronnie Campbell MP for Blyth, said: “As Member of Parliament for Blyth Valley, I am delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has granted an award to the Blyth Tall Ship. This is excellent news for the local community and a fantastic project for the young people of Blyth who will be able to experience firsthand training and develop their skills in modern engineering by means of heritage boat building. I am positive this project will act as a catalyst for further positive developments in and around the quayside at South Harbour Blyth and I look forward to seeing how this project develops over the coming months.”

Notes to editors

Blyth Tall Ship is a charity working alongside Blyth community volunteers to recapture the spirit of adventure and global entrepreneurship that was employed in Blyth to discover the Antarctic Landmass 200 years ago, in order to inspire future generations to fulfil their full potential. This is being achieved by training young people in modern engineering skills using the medium of heritage boat building, developing a museum and visitor experience around the history of the Port of Blyth and running an expedition to celebrate the discovery of the Antarctic Landmass from Blyth, by repeating the voyage.

Further information

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