£1.2million invested in skills across the East of England

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Heritage projects across the East of England are to share in £1.2million investment to provide heritage skills as part of a nation-wide Skills for the Future programme launched today by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

As part of the scheme, Peterborough Environment City Trust has been awarded over £180,000 for a wide-ranging programme of traineeships.

The Closing the Gap scheme will be offer young people training in the wide range of skills needed to care for, research and manage our heritage.

Some will learn how to plan and deliver exhibitions, including experience of researching, promotion and conserving the collections themselves. This will involve identifying future visitors, and looking at ways to get people from across the community in their local museums and heritage.

Other trainees will learn practical natural landscape skills from the use of cutting-edge mapping systems, to botanical and habitat surveying, to woodland and species management. Traditional conservation skills including coppicing and hedge laying, will also be taught alongside modern management skills in working with volunteers, partners and contractors.

The rest of the trainees will learn practical built heritage skills. This will include the practical skills required to manage sites, such as an Elizabethan garden, learning skills required to survey historic buildings, explore archaeological fields and reduce the carbon footprint of our heritage treasures.

The Peterborough project comes as part of an overall investment of £17m – treble the amount it originally set aside - in 54 projects across the country. This money will deliver 808 placements and adds-up to an impressive 780 years' worth of paid training opportunities for people across the UK seeking a career in heritage.

The focus is not solely on traditional conservation training but also a wide variety of more contemporary skills, such as managing volunteers and using social media, that will help reinvigorate and broaden the appeal of the heritage industry to job-seekers.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the HLF, said: "When the recession kicked-in last year we thought very hard about how the Heritage Lottery Fund could make a difference to people's lives at a time of real need. The answer was an innovative and ambitious programme focusing on equipping people with practical skills to help them secure future employment.

"We have been astounded by the response which clearly shows a great hunger for skills training within our sector. We're delighted to be supporting 54 projects – from learning how to digitise archives to conserving historic gardens – and we know that the range of placements on offer will attract people who might not previously have considered working in heritage."

Alongside Colchester and Ipswich Museums, the other successful projects across the East of England are:

Learning from the Past – Skilled for the Future - Norfolk Museums and Archaeology service
Norfolk Museums and Archaeology service have been awarded over £600,000 for their Learning from the Past - Skilled for the Future scheme that will offer 58 training places for 16 - 19 year olds.

The project will offer young people work-based training in traditional skills and landscape management - the skills which have been important in shaping the region and now play a vital role in the tourism and the local economy. The scheme will work in partnership with the Museum of East Anglian Life (MEAL) to offer training through short courses and apprenticeships.

RSPB Nature Counts
RSPB nature reserves across the UK will provide training opportunities in natural heritage for 18 young people. Traineeships will focus either on ecological recording or visitor services. The courses will be a combination of work-based placements and training courses, and will be undertaken over a three-year period with the aim of improving conservation management and increasing access to natural heritage.

Documenting our Heritage for the Future - Ipswich and Colchester Museum Service
Young people will be given the chance to learn about information management techniques by using up-to-date IT systems to document the museum collections. Alongside developing their research skills, they will also be trained in handling and caring for these important collections.

Two of the trainees will work with Colchester and Ipswich Museum, one with the Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket and the fourth at Gainsborough's House

Notes to editors

Launched in July 2009, Skills for the Future is a one-off HLF programme supporting organisations across the UK to create new training places. Grants range from £100,000 to £1million for a number of traineeships over a period of up to five years with an emphasis on high-quality work-based training.

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. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, including £282 million to more than 2,800 projects across the East of England.

Further information

HLF Press Office, Laura Bates on 020 7591 6027, email lbates@hlf.org.uk or Katie Owen on 020 7591 6036, email katieo@hlf.org.uk .