First Scottish Trainees Start Coveted Heritage Skills Programme

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Seven trainees start new jobs this week learning practical skills at one of Scotland's National Collections, as part of a UK-wide programme of skills training.

Selected from over 300 applicants from all walks of life, they'll learn key skills that will help them get jobs in archives, museums and galleries in the future.

Including an actor who has been running ghost tours and someone with a passionate interest in military history, their training will range from analysing never-before-seen WWII aerial reconnaissance photography to helping put together exhibitions of Scotland's architecture and archaeology.

They'll start work at Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS), the first organisation in Scotland to host one of the year-long, paid training programmes funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. RCAHMS is the national collection of materials on the built environment of Scotland, and also holds Scotland's National Collection of Aerial Photography.

RCAHMS has secured the largest share of the £2.6million pot for Scotland: its £606,000, grant will allow the organisation to host 21 paid training places over the next 3 years in documenting and digitising archive collections and promoting their public access.

It's one of seven projects under the Skills for the Future programme*, funded by Heritage Lottery Fund, to offer skills training to anyone with a passion for cultural heritage. The focus is on vocational learning, helping to meet the skills gaps identified by heritage bodies, and on encouraging potential trainees from all walks of life.

Trainees at RCAHMS will learn transferable skills such as how to document, conserve and digitise archives – working with collection materials including historical maps of Scotland, original architects' plans of some of the nation's most treasured buildings, and recently declassified aerial reconnaissance photography of WWII. In addition, they will be trained in how to use communications and education programmes to inspire understanding and enjoyment of archive material. From delivering workshops and putting together publications, they will also explore less traditional outlets, like the use of Apps, Facebook and Twitter in promoting cultural heritage.

Other projects due to start in Scotland include conservation and repair training, ecological surveying, volunteer management and traditional woodworking crafts.

Speaking on behalf of RCAHMS, Diana Murray, Chief Executive, said: "We hope this training programme will make a real difference to people's lives at a time of recession when it's harder than ever for those without qualifications or experience to get jobs.

"We had a fantastic response which demonstrates how keen people are for practical skills training in the heritage, museums and galleries sector."

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: “Learning 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 trainees' newly-learned heritage skills will make a difference not only to their own lives but to the future cultural landscape of Scotland. HLF has been greatly enthused by the popularity of our Skills for the Future programme. There is clearly a great desire for training in the heritage sector and we wish these trainees the very best on the first day of their journeys towards new careers.”

Notes for editors

RCAHMS is the National Collection of materials on Scotland’s built environment that connects people to places across time. It is the first port of call for information about the built environment of Scotland, from prehistory to the present and records the changing landscape of Scotland and collects materials relating to it. www.rcahms.gov.uk

* 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. To date, HLF has invested over £500million in Scotland.

Skills for the Future offers work-based training in a wide range of skills that are needed to look after buildings, landscapes, habitats, species, and museum and archive collections, as well as equipping people to lead education and outreach programmes, manage volunteers and use new technology. Its focus is on vocational learning, helping meet the skills gaps identified by heritage bodies, and on encouraging potential trainees from all walks of life. Trainees will learn how to engage families, schools and communities with their heritage, bringing heritage sites and collections alive for the next generation.

Further information

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