Support for skills development in Northern Ireland

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today announced its initial support for three new skills projects in Northern Ireland. The £1.1million investment will be used to fund 40 paid training placements and skills development opportunities for people seeking a career in the heritage sector. The awards were made through the Skills for the Future programme as part of a £20million boost for 39 projects across the UK.

Commenting on the announcement, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: “We recognise the hugely important role that heritage plays in creating a brighter, more prosperous future for us all. We are delighted to announce this investment in new skills development opportunities that will help to broaden the appeal of the heritage industry to job-seekers. Forty apprentices will be able to gain invaluable on-the-job training, helping to address the skills shortages within the local heritage sector and helping to build resilience for the future.”

Skills for the Future offers high quality work-based training in skills that are vital to look after our heritage: buildings, landscapes, habitats, species, and museum and archive collections, as well as equipping people to lead education and outreach programmes and manage volunteers. Through this programme HLF also continues to support organisations in diversifying their workforce, encouraging more young people and those from diverse cultural backgrounds to make their career in heritage.

A £379,000 HLF grant will be used to deliver the first ever Heritage Apprenticeship Programme in Wood Occupations in Northern Ireland. Twelve apprentices will receive bespoke, structured training and assessment helping them to achieve a Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction) – Wood Occupations. The apprentices will receive both on and off the job training with experienced heritage contractors.

The project, which will be delivered by CITB - ConstructionSkills NI, will also provide a unique opportunity for three college lecturers to assist in the delivery of the apprenticeship programme, and through their involvement become accredited to deliver the training to more students in their respective colleges. A number of ambassadors will be funded to mentor the apprentices and promote the project and heritage sector in Northern Ireland.

The Ulster Wildlife Trust Ltd was awarded £371,200 to fund hands-on training placements for 18 trainees. Training will include wildlife and marine identification; habitat identification; hedge laying, planting and maintenance; and woodland, grassland and wetland management. The year-long placements will equip the trainees with the skills to receive an accredited award that will enhance their employability and recognise their success. Throughout their placements the trainees will work closely with local communities across Northern Ireland, helping to inspire people about the natural environment and encouraging them to protect their local wildlife and wild places.

Ten apprenticeships will also be created across National Museums Northern Ireland (NMNI), thanks to a £366,700 grant. The collections based training placements will focus on seven key areas that are required to connect museums and their collections with local communities. Practical skills will be developed in collections care; research and interpretation; outreach programme development; learning programme development; digital engagement; volunteering and oral history, reminiscence and genealogy. The trainees will be supported by a skilled network of coaches, host museums, heritage organisations and a dedicated project co-ordinator, gaining the skills and experience necessary to pursue a career in this area of work.

The three projects in Northern Ireland will now move forward to the next stage of the funding process, where they will submit more detailed proposals to secure the full grant requested.

Skills for the Future is now closed to new applications but new training placements will be created until 2018.