Heritage Lottery Fund invests £17m in skills

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced an investment of £17m – treble the amount it originally set aside - in 54 projects under its Skills for the Future programme.

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. It will not only support traditional conservation training but also a wide variety of more contemporary skills, such as managing volunteers and using social media to get people involved in heritage, 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."

John Penrose MP, Minister for Tourism and Heritage, said: "This investment is a great way of giving people access to practical on-the-job training, at a time when we need to do all we can to give people a helping hand to follow their careers. Making sure we have a skilled workforce for the future will also help to protect the very best heritage from our past, and I'm pleased this scheme will benefit projects in all corners of the UK."

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.

Skills for the Future is complementary to HLF's existing £10m Training Bursary Programme which has been running for the last four years delivering a wide range of skills training - including blacksmithing, botanic gardening, stone masonry, thatching and book conservation. Over 700 placements have been created providing accredited work-based training with highly-skilled crafts people and environmental specialists. In combination with the Skills for the Future placements, this means that over 1,500 training opportunities have been created by HLF.

Projects from all four corners of the UK are benefiting from the Skills for the Future programme and include:

Training the Curator – The British Museum, London
HLF's grant of £510,200 will bring together the British Museum and five regional partners to deliver a work-based training programme encouraging practical skills among a diverse future generation of heritage curators and collection

managers. Trainees will learn how to handle and display objects as well as how to best communicate with the public. The programme will offer 15 people, at least half of them from black, Asian and minority ethnic backgrounds, an 18-month traineeship with six months based at the British Museum and 12-months at a partner museum.

Conserving Local Communities Heritage – Glamorgan Archives
An HLF grant of £224,400 will enable Glamorgan Archives to provide work-based placements covering skills for digitisation, research, conservation and working with the wider community. The project involves close partnership work amongst organisations in South Wales and will help plug a local skills gap. A particular focus is unemployed young men under the age of 30 who will be identified with the help of agencies such as Jobcentre Plus.

Natural Communities Programmes – BTCV Scotland and Conservation Volunteers Northern Ireland (CVNI)
HLF's grant of £520,700 will make possible this joint BTCV/CVNI programme, designed to help people understand, value and conserve their natural heritage. Twenty-four trainees will be equipped with the skills to work closely with communities to identify local environmental needs, responsibilities and opportunities and to help them put their ideas into action.

Heritage Blacksmith Bursaries – National Heritage Ironwork Group, UK-wide
The National Heritage Ironwork Group has been awarded an HLF grant of £350,200 to train 16 people to conserve and restore historic ironwork. Conservation principles and record keeping will be taught along side advanced practical skills in 'hot' forge work. The project, which addresses a real shortage in this heritage area, will be run by expert blacksmiths and will create year-long placements for a wide range of people across the UK.

Keeping History Afloat: Traditional Boat Building – The Waterways Trust, Ellesmere Port
The Waterways Trust will use its HLF grant of £110,200 to run a training scheme for skills relating to traditional boat building and the conservation of historic vessels. Working in partnership with National Historic Ships, the Trust will take on three trainees over an 18-month period at the Heritage Boatyard based at the National Waterways Museum, Ellesmere Port. It will equip trainees with a variety of hands-on skills, targeting both 18- to 25-year-olds and older trainees who live locally. There is a significant shortage of people to conserve the 1,000 ships on the National Register of Historic Vessels and this project will make an important contribution to the sustainable future of the UK's maritime heritage.

Skills for Wildlife: Conservation Traineeships for Young People – Sheffield Wildlife Trust
Sheffield Wildlife Trust will use its HLF grant of £345,800 to train young people in biodiversity-focused land management skills. Working jointly with Yorkshire and Derbyshire Wildlife Trusts, participants will learn skills including coppicing, hedgelaying and dry stone walling, species identification and use of tools and machinery. Sixteen young people, aged between 16 and 19, will undertake full-time training for one year with the aim of achieving an NVQ in Environmental Conservation or Land-based Operations. This project will help overcome the lack of opportunities for young people without formal qualifications.

To apply for a placement with one of the 54 successful applicants. Placements with these organisations will start towards end of 2010 / beginning of 2011.

John Penrose MP, Minister for Tourism and Heritage, will be attending an HLF announcement event at the British Museum, hosted by Dame Jenny Abramsky, at 9.30am on Tuesday 8 June. This will offer the opportunity to meet both past HLF skills applicants and some of the new organisations being awarded money.

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.

For a list of all 54 projects and contact details - please call the HLF press office on the phone numbers below.

Further information

Katie Owen or Alison Scott, HLF Press Office, on 020 7591 6036 / 6032 or 07973 613 820.