£1.3m investment for heritage skills in Wales

08/06/2010

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced an investment of £1.3m under its Skills for the Future programme in Wales. This money will deliver 70 placements and adds-up to an impressive 68 years' worth of paid training opportunities for people across Wales seeking a career in heritage. It will not only support traditional conservation training but also a wide variety of more contemporary skills, such as digitisation and community engagement, 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 these three projects in Wales – 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."

Lesley Griffiths AM, Deputy Minister for Science, Innovation and Skills, said: "News of this investment is hugely welcome as it means people will have the chance to secure practical on-the-job training. It's great that the Heritage Lottery Fund has taken the lead and responded so swiftly to an identified skills shortage just at a time when people are going to need a helping hand."

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 across the UK.

Projects include:

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.

Ten placements will be available, with trainees spending three months developing core skills at the Glamorgan Archives before embarking on three additional three month placements at partner sites. The partners include the National Library of Wales, public libraries and museums in Blaenau Gwent, Bridgend, Caerphilly, Monmouthshire, Swansea, Torfaen and the University of Wales Newport and Cardiff.

Heritage Horticulture Skills Scheme - National Museum Wales

The National Museum Wales has been awarded a £498,100 HLF grant to establish a work-based accreditation qualification in specialised heritage gardening. The award will help to fill the identified practical skills and excellence gap in the horticultural sector, particularly for Jacobean, Victorian and Edwardian period techniques.

The new training qualification at NVQ Level 2 will be open to applicants with a basic qualification in practical horticulture and a passion for a practical career helping to conserve Wales' heritage gardens. The 30 training placements will be at some of Wales' premier heritage sites with St Fagans: National History Museum in Cardiff the lead partner in the project along with Dyffryn Gardens, Aberglasney, National Botanic Garden of Wales, and Cardiff and Newport Councils.

The scheme will help close the skills gap by greatly enhancing the employability of trainees whilst providing heritage employers with the opportunity to increase their skilled workforce.

Andrew Dixey, Estates Manager at St Fagans: National History Museum, commented: "St Fagans is just one of Wales's world-famous heritage gardens, but without good, trained craftspeople it would be impossible for us to preserve our unique gardening heritage.

"Gardening is not just a hobby but for many a way of life. Unfortunately many traditional gardening craft skills are being lost and we must help to conserve them. We welcome the awarding of this grant because it will lead to an increase in trained gardeners with specialist craft skills and provide individuals with a fulfilling career in the heritage gardens sector."

Foundations in Heritage: learning core heritage skills in the workplace in West Wales - Carmarthenshire County Council

Carmarthenshire County Council will use its £662,400 HLF grant to provide local people with opportunities to acquire traditional heritage building skills. Training will be particularly targeted to attract younger people and women and will include lime plastering, stone masonry, slate and tile roofing, carpentry and joinery.

There is a significant shortage of these traditional building skills in West Wales that are essential for the conservation of the high number of heritage buildings in the area.

The project aims to provide 12 month accredited quality work-based training for 30 trainees at genuine heritage construction sites with the opportunity to attain a heritage qualification at NVQ3 or higher. To encourage diversification of the heritage construction sector all female applicants will be guaranteed an interview.

Trainees will be provided with a mentor and the heritage firm trainers will be given 'train the trainer' business support. Local heritage employers have struggled in recent years to find suitable apprentices with relevant experience.

Selwyn Jones, a stone mason based in Betws, nr Ammanford, said: "I've not come across anyone in recent years with the basic skills needed to develop a career in the heritage building sector. I'm delighted to hear that this will now be reversed and I'll be putting myself forward to offer work based training placements.

I’m passionate about traditional skills and I want to be able to pass on this knowledge to the next generation. I’m also extremely keen to encourage more women into the sector. My wife works with me as a stone mason, you don’t need physical strength but you do need patience!

Eifion Bowen, Carmarthenshire County Council’s Head of Planning Services, said "The scheme is an excellent example of how conservation can lead regeneration in rural areas. West Wales has a wealth of traditional buildings which is an important resource economically, as they represent opportunities for new uses and businesses and also culturally as they reflect long standing building traditions when the use of sustainable materials was the central principle.

“Experience with conservation schemes in towns and villages in Carmarthenshire shows there is a demand for these traditional skills generated through the repair and maintenance of older buildings. The announcement means the County Council can build upon the work already undertaken at the Traditional Sustainable Building Centre in Llandeilo which has also been supported by HLF, European grants and the National Trust.

“Not only will it create jobs for staff to run the programme but it will provide the relevant skills and experience for students to progress and succeed in the heritage construction industry in the region."

Anyone interested in applying for a placement with one of the 54 successful applicants across the UK should go to the Skills for the Future projects page.

Placements with these organisations will start towards the end of 2010/beginning of 2011.

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.

HLF awarded a total of 54 projects across the UK.

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, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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