

The Jarrow dig in 1969

The focus of the projects vary widely, from the struggles for social justice to a mining disaster 200 years ago and the lifecycle of a famous feathered Tyneside resident to an archaeological dig which founded a museum. Each one has received funding through HLF's Sharing Heritage programme and they all hold a special place in their community's history.

Every community has its own unique heritage, but only by recording and sharing it can it become a lasting part of an area's identity. Exploring local heritage can immortalise the lives of extraordinary (and ordinary) residents, turn stories into folklores and protect our natural surroundings for generations of families to enjoy.

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: "Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, an amazing range of projects across the North East have been able to conserve and share heritage at a very local level. We're extremely proud of our Sharing Heritage programme, especially the vital role community organisations and volunteers play – after all, who knows a community and its heritage better than the people who live within it?"

Ivor added: "In fact more than 30,000 volunteers have given an amazing 1.1million hours of their time to completed projects – both large and small – across the North East."

HLF is keen to hear from more community groups who have ideas to explore their heritage. What part of your community's story would you explore?

The grant awards being announced today are:

Footsteps to Freedom in the North East – Journey to Justice, awarded £9,900 HLF grant

What inspires people to take action? Why do campaigns for social change work? Journey to Justice is teaming up with youth organisation Space 2 to answer these questions and explore Tyneside's proud heritage links to social justice campaigning and anti-racist movements.

Marking the 50th anniversary of the 1965 UK Race Relations Act, the project will also discover more about Martin Luther King's visit to Newcastle in 1967 and the impact the US civil rights movement had on the UK.

The research will culminate in an oral history project and a display as part of an exhibition at the Discovery Museum in April. Journey to Justice plans to take the project across the country.

Groundbreaker – Bede's World, awarded £10,000 HLF grant

Groundbreaker will tell the story of the local volunteers from Jarrow and Wearmouth who took part in an archaeological dig five decades ago which led to the foundation of Bede's World Museum.

Led by Dame Rosemary Cramp, the only requirement to become a dig assistant at the site of St Paul's monastery was to be older than four! The project will capture for the first time the cherished memories and folklores which resulted from the pioneering dig and create an interactive display within the museum itself.

Kittiwake Cam – Durham Wildlife Trust, awarded £10,000 HLF grant

A common sight around the quayside in Newcastle and Gateshead, kittiwakes are also of considerable natural heritage importance as they are the furthest inland colony of gulls in the world. These fascinating birds are a source of local interest and pride – but how much do we really know about them?

Durham Wildlife Trust is working with BALTIC Centre for Contemporary Art to stream live footage into the centre to give visitors a unique insight into their lives and a programme of interactive events to help develop a greater understanding of the birds which call this very urban landscape their home.

Heaton Beneath Our Feet – Heaton History Group, awarded £8,300 HLF grant

The familiar phrase 'coals to Newcastle' demonstrates the enduring legacy of the city's place in coal mining history. Now the Heaton History Group is focusing on the significant role Heaton had to play. Here the mines were productive, the coal was of the highest quality and a number of important innovations were made. The suburb is also remembered as the site of the 1815 mining disaster which claimed the lives of 75 men and boys.

This project will mark the bi-centenary of the disaster, challenge inaccurate mythology surrounding it and explore the lives of the mining community and the challenges they had to overcome. A heritage trail will be created and local schools and communities will benefit from a series of talks and resource packs to gain an insight into a key part of Heaton's heritage.

Further information

For further information, interviews and images contact Rebecca Lamm, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6245 or Rebecca.Lamm@hlf.org.uk.