Digability! - Yorkshire and Humber reaches out with region-wide archaeology projects

06/10/2011

To be run by the Workers' Educational Association (WEA), the three year region-wide initiative has been launched in time for Disability History Month in November, and will enable 300 people who would not usually be given the chance to take part in an archaeology dig the chance to get out in the field, learn new skills and have fun uncovering Yorkshire's fascinating historic past.

The scheme will target a variety of groups including adults with learning difficulties, mental health issues, and physical disabilities as well as those from underrepresented ethnic minority communities from across Yorkshire and the Humber. Sites expected to take part include:

- Sheffield Manor Lodge
- The Iron Age Roundhouse at Heeley City Farm, Sheffield
- Romano-British settlements in Chapel House Wood, Wharfedale
- Medieval field systems in North Killingholme near the Humber
- Conisbrough Castle, South Yorkshire

Fiona Spiers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for Yorkshire and the Humber, said: "This is a fantastic and wide-reaching scheme that aims to improve access to archaeology projects for underrepresented groups. There is a myriad of benefits to be gained from getting involved in archaeology from strengthening communities to learning new skills, learning how to be part of a team to helping to uncover Yorkshire's rich history for future generations."

This important scheme has been developed to meet the needs identified by the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) statement that it is vital work is done 'to develop more positive action to challenge the perceptual, social or economic barriers that tend to exclude disabled people, ethnic minorities and people from economically and socially deprived areas from direct engagement in archaeology.'

Rob Hindle, Project Manager, WEA, explained further how the project will benefit people: "Heritage is a collective historical legacy: shaped by the totality of people inhabiting the region throughout its history, it belongs to everyone, whatever their background, experience or circumstances. This project will provide an opportunity to demonstrate that everyone can play a role in its interpretation, celebration and conservation."

Entitled the Inclusive Archaeology Education Project the WEA initiative will involve 1,200 hours of classroom and outdoor teaching over three years. The project will start with an introduction to archaeology through practical, hands-on tasks and visits to heritage sites locally, followed by field-based activities at identified archaeological sites.

Engaging learners through a range of innovative activities including 'a history of ourselves in 300 objects' (inspired by the BBC Radio series 'A History of the World in 100 objects'), the scheme will offer participants the chance to develop key skills such as object handling and identification, using photographs, surveying and mapping, scale drawing, test pitting, finds processing and analysis, and group presentation.

The project will also offer local university archaeology students the opportunity to undertake the WEA taught City and Guilds qualification, ‘Preparing to Teach in the Lifelong Learning Sector’ and to undergo additional training related to the participants needs.

Notes to editors

* The HLF grant to the project Inclusive Archaeology Project is for £200,000 (95% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

Disabilty History Month
For more information please visit the Disability History Month website.

Further information

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