Filling the skills gap

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An exciting project that will help train young people in heritage conservation skills has been given a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant of £302,900, it was announced today.

Run by the North of England Civic Trust, through the Heritage Skills Initiative (HSI), the three-year project – Heritage Skills in Education (HSed) – will work with local schools, colleges and universities helping to engage, and train young people in specialist restoration skills. The project will help establish links between education professionals, heritage sector workers, young people and skilled craftspeople, creating a valuable network.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther said: “The heritage sector is in urgent need of people who have specific conservation skills and many of the projects that we fund need experts to make them happen. HLF’s funding will offer the chance for people to get hands-on, practical experience and training – helping them to get inspired about conserving our heritage and providing them with the necessary skills to move forward in the sector.”

Learning and Skills Manager, Andie Harris said: “Since 2007, HSI has engaged with a wide variety of audiences and provided over 67,000 hours of specialist heritage skills training and events and sign-posted people to heritage qualifications, specialist apprenticeships and HLF bursary schemes. HSed will provide meaningful opportunities for young people to understand and engage with their local historic buildings, whilst being supported by a range of specialist heritage mentors and trying out an array of practical activities.”

The students will provide a cohort ready to access the many training opportunities and develop their skills in readiness for a career in the heritage sector and in doing so, protecting the distinctive skills and character of our historic environment.

In order to help engage young people with heritage and looking after it for the future, three learning programmes have been developed to cater for schools, colleges and universities – all focusing on different parts of the North East’s built heritage. Working on historic buildings throughout the project, skills and training on offer include archival research, surveying, archaeological investigation and traditional conservation and restoration workshops.

Local communities will also have a part to play and will be able to share memories of the buildings and heritage sites included in the project with the young people. Participants will record and share these memories as part of the project revealing what their heritage means to them.

English Heritage’s ‘Heritage at Risk Register’ identified that the North East has 13,646 items of built heritage and just over 6% of these are ‘at risk’. Educational institutions set to be involved with the project include: Durham, Northumberland and Newcastle Universities, Newcastle, Redcar and Cleveland and Hartlepool Colleges and Houghton Kepier Sports College, Education Village, Venerable Bede, Roseberry Sports and Community College, Queen Elizabeth High School, Seaham School of Technology, Byedales School and Carmel College.

The project will be launched on Friday 22 June at the Heritage Skills Festival at Tynemouth Station. For further information or to take part, please contact the HSed team on hsed@nect.org.uk.

Further information

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Notes to editors

- As a charitable company, NECT is overseen by its board of trustees, all of whom work voluntarily, in their own time, for the Trust.
- In recent years NECT has delivered nearly £10million of projects, generating jobs in areas of deprivation and contributing to the local economy. Its contribution to regeneration is in raising the standards of design and traditional heritage skills, as well as education. North of Englands Civic Trust's aim is to improve the contribution the environment makes to the quality of life for all in the region, its cultural identity and its creative potential. Initiated by the North East Heritage Environment Forum, the Heritage Skills Initiative (HSI) has identified how severe the skills shortage is in the region and how the region is responding to that shortage. It has determined ways of stemming the increasing heritage skills shortage by examining opportunities, raising awareness and creating the training and partnership opportunities needed to address the shortages in those trades required to restore and maintain the historic environment. The HSI has examined the sector through mapping current training, the present skills base and demand for skills in the region, and is in the process of creating opportunities for training, increasing awareness of the heritage sector and developing an active and collaborative network across the region.