Local skills help preserve landscape in Blaenavon

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The Forgotten Landscapes Partnership, funded by a £1.4 million Heritage Lottery Fund grant, is the final piece in the jigsaw of Blaenavon's regeneration and will enhance further promotion of the site. The aim is for the landscape to act as a stepping stone into the Valleys Regional Park and a gateway to Valleys tourism.

The site contains a wealth of built and industrial heritage, boasting 17 scheduled ancient monuments and 109 listed buildings. Many of the features of interests are currently hidden but work has already started on the restoration of archaeological features, such as the Pwll Du Tramway tunnel which was used to transport coal, limestone and pig iron to the ironworks.

The project is providing work for six employees, at Abergavenny-based contractors Alun Griffiths (Contractors), who cover a range of skills from stone masonry to carpentry. Local contractor Brian Barnard, who has been working in the area as a stone mason for almost 40 years is working on preserving key brickwork including the culvert and dam at Keeper's Pond which were both in need of repair.

Brian said: "It's great to be working on a project which is going to benefit the local community for years to come. I find working on heritage projects really interesting, because it's different from day to-day work of building retaining walls and I feel like I'm playing a part in making a difference.

"Seeing local people working together to preserve the area is really refreshing. Visitors will no longer be just walking past parts of history unaware of what they are missing, as the little monuments, as I like to call them, that are dotted around the countryside will be back in perfect condition and interpreted for them."

HLF funding will also support the employment of six members of staff including a Volunteer Coordinator. It is hoped 50 local people will get involved and create an extensive volunteer workforce to help locals and visitors make the most of their experience of the landscape. Volunteers will be trained to undertake land management, conduct surveys and monitoring as well as interpretative walking guides.

Jennifer Stewart, Head of HLF in Wales, said: "Projects like Forgotten Landscapes shows there is a real demand for traditional skills in Wales. This is a brilliant opportunity for local people to get involved, learn new skills and in doing so play a part in taking their heritage forward. What's more these important sites will not only be safeguarded but also the skills needed to maintain them for the future."

Steven Rogers, Forgotten Landscapes Project Development Manager, said: "Based on extensive community consultation, this project has taken three years to plan. The next three years is all about delivery and the six strong Forgotten Landscapes Staff team can't wait to get stuck in!"

Notes to editors

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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