Helping hands

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Volunteers are often vital to the success of a heritage project.

In fact, over the past two decades, well over half a million people have given an incredible 22million hours of their time to HLF funded projects across the UK.

There are so many ways volunteers can be involved – from delving into archives and collecting memories from members of the community to picking up a paintbrush or creating a brand-new website.

As well as time, volunteers offer key skills and invaluable local knowledge. They also play an important role in sharing enthusiasm and news about their projects.

In return, volunteers get the chance to develop new skills, explore first-hand the heritage that interests them and become more involved in their community.

Thanks to all the volunteers who do so much for our heritage!

Case study: River Tees Rediscovered

A recent event in the North East demonstrated just how much can be achieved by helping hands.

When the River Tees Rediscovered project launched their Welcome Aboard volunteer programme, around 75 people arrived to help out.

[quote=Lucy Chapman, River Tees Rediscovered] “We get a fantastic mix of enthusiasm and knowledge.”[/quote]

Some were from local businesses, others from charitable organisations and the public sector – even BBC Radio Tees turned up to document their effort!

In just one day the group prepared new footpaths, painted bridges and planted enough seeds to grow over 50,000 trees. Take a look at the video, produced by students from Darlington College, to see them in action.

The project is being carried out by a partnership of organisations. This gives volunteers the chance to work alongside a variety of different people while working towards the shared goal of making the River Tees and its heritage more accessible.

Speaking about the volunteer programme, Project Officer Lucy Chapman said: “By bringing volunteers from different areas together we get a fantastic mix of enthusiasm and knowledge that isn’t always evident when you restrict sessions to one particular company or group, for us working in partnership is proving to be extremely successful.”