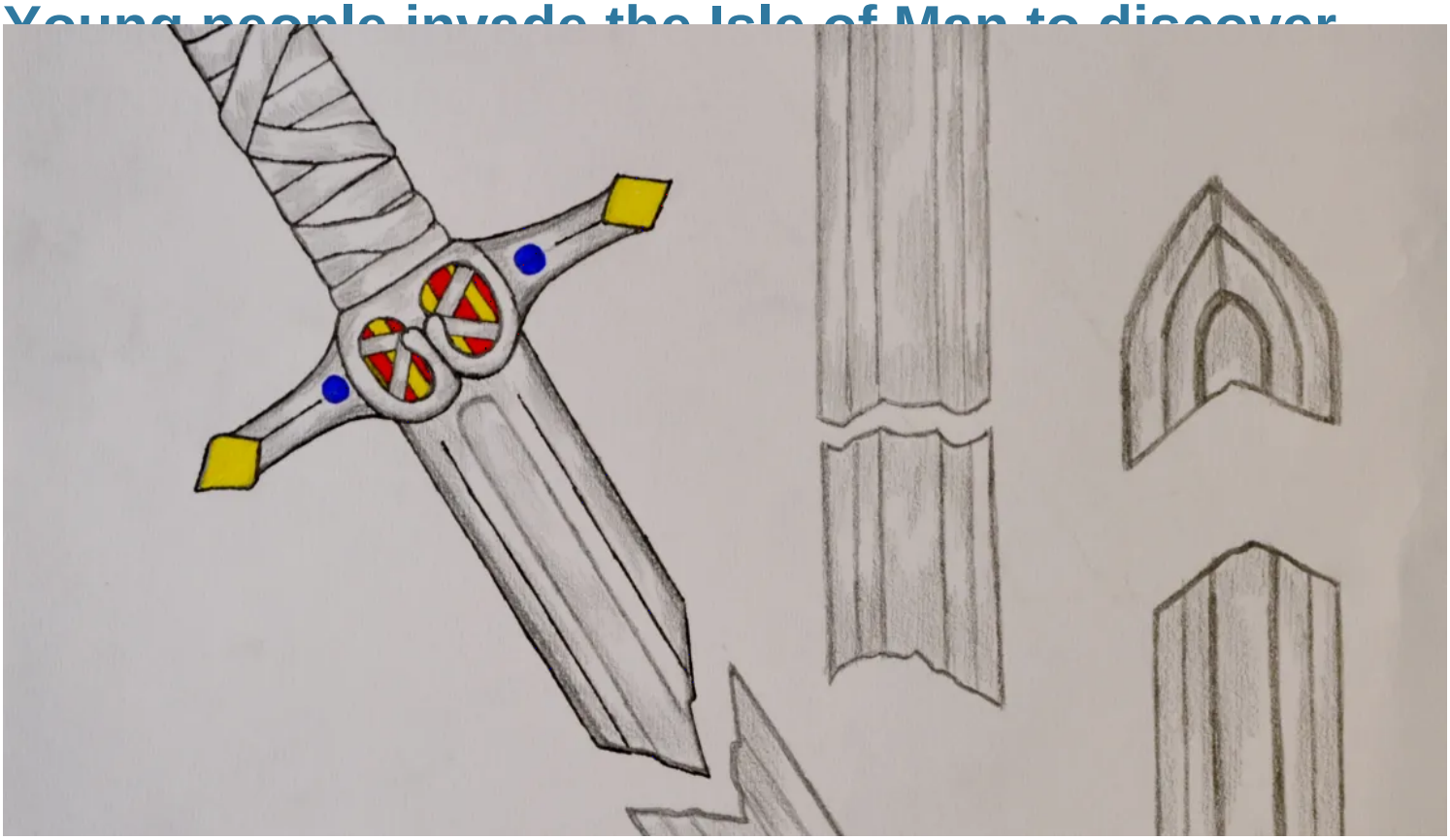
Young people invade the Isle of Man to discover



Drawing by project participant John Lake from the Studio Theatre West

Members of Prism Arts Studio Theatre West will research their Cumbrian Viking legacy, which will include visits to local Viking sites at St. Bees and Gosforth, as well as setting sail for the Isle of Man. The project offers young people with learning disabilities an unrivalled opportunity to discover the rich cultural heritage left by these people of the North.

Young people will trace their Viking heritage through Cumbrian dialect, visits to heritage sites and Viking artefacts. They will learn about Viking culture including farming, food, living conditions, warfare, weaving and dying cloth - together with the symbols and stories from Viking sagas and mythology. Project research and development will be supported by Prism Arts professional artists, local Viking heritage experts and heritage partner, Manx National Heritage.

Working in residence at Distington Community School, Studio Theatre members will create their own Viking saga based on their research. The saga will be taken on tour and performed at schools and venues along the West Coast of Cumbria before being taken back to the Isle of Man.

The project has been made possible by the support of Mayfield SEN School, Whitehaven, Distington Community School, Workington, and Holme St Cuthbert’s Primary School, Solway, who will contribute their time and resources to the project.

Catherine Coulthard, Director at Prism Arts, said: "The working relationship between Distington Community School and Mayfield SEN School continues to deliver great benefits for young, disabled people in the West of Cumbria. The staff team are looking forward to the challenges and opportunities this project will bring. Prism Arts looks forward to working with our new heritage partner Manx National Heritage. 2016 is going to be an exciting year for all those involved."

The Vikings first appeared in Cumbria's Eden valley in 876 AD when the Danish leader, Halfdan, and his troops destroyed much of Carlisle. The Norwegian Vikings continued to invade Cumbria, setting out from bases in Ireland and the Isle of Man, and then settling along the west coast of Cumbria. Crosses, carvings, place names, words and traditions date back to these Norse times. The Vikings introduced the practice of Haaf fishing and Herdwick sheep, which are now such a feature of Cumbria today.

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: “Viking heritage is scattered across the towns and landscapes of West Cumbria and, from place names to the local dialect, their legacy is still evident today. This National Lottery grant will enable these young people to embark on a real journey of discovery to uncover and capture this fascinating heritage and share it with the rest of the community.”

A seminar, ‘Who is the Learner and who is the Educator’, will be held at Brewery Arts Centre in Kendal on 15 March 2016 and will celebrate the partnership between Prism Arts, Mayfield School and Distington Community School.

Notes to editors

Prism Arts is an arts organisation that delivers participatory arts projects designed to meet the needs of disabled young people and adults, as well as older people recovering from a stroke or living with dementia. Prism Arts Studio Theatre West sessions take place during term time at Distington Community School and at Cumbria Business Interaction Centre in Carlisle.

Further information

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