North East coastal heritage to be protected with



A Little tern says hello to a Coast Care volunteer Northumberland Coast AONB

Three historic Life Brigade groups are part of a swathe of projects on the North East coast, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Life Brigades have a long history. In 1864, Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade became the first group in the country to provide sea rescue facilities on a voluntary basis, going on to inspire other Life Brigades across England.

Each of the three remaining groups, in Tynemouth, Sunderland and South Shields, has received support from HLF to help conserve collections telling the 150-year history of the Life Brigade. As well as attracting new recruits, the projects have developed the skills of existing and new volunteers to ensure the Brigades remain a key part of the coastal story.

Other groups in the area are also working to celebrate coastal communities and protect some beautiful natural heritage, thanks to National Lottery players.

Durham Heritage Coast

Durham Heritage Coast is working with 300 volunteers to reconnect people with the heritage of the coast between Hendon and Seaham. Under-used and under-appreciated, the area is often subject to vandalism and antisocial

behaviour.

Volunteers will help to improve the environment and encourage local people to take pride in their landscape. Activities will include tree and wildflower sowing, litter picking, repairs to vandalised signage, creating a guided trail and a programme of walks. They will also work alongside Northumbrian Police to develop a Coast Watch scheme to deter antisocial behaviour. A programme of outdoor education workshops for five schools and the opportunity for youth groups to take part in the John Muir Challenge aims to inspire the next generation to care for their coast.

Another project run by Durham Heritage Coast is aimed specifically at young people throughout the community to encourage them to learn to love their coast and their heritage. The 23-month scheme will see the group discover, conserve and share a ‘wild place’ and work towards the John Muir Challenge.

Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership

Further north, the Northumberland Coast AONB (Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) Partnership has received initial support for its plans to establish a skilled volunteer base to celebrate and conserve the north Northumberland coast from just south of Berwick-upon-Tweed to the Coquet Estuary.

Characterised by sweeping sands, rolling hills, rocky cliffs and isolated islands, the area is steeped in the history of 8,000 years of human activity. Two hundred volunteers, three community champions and a group of Young Rangers (aged 13 to 19) will gain training in conservation and heritage skills. Activities will include beach cleaning, monitoring historic buildings, control of invasive species and mitigating the effects of coastal erosion, scrub clearance and dry stone walling.

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: “As well as some outstanding natural heritage, our coasts have an incredible social story to tell. Communities are a key part of that story so we’re delighted to support projects such as these which have the enthusiasm and hard work of local volunteers at their core.

"Thanks to money raised by National Lottery players, these projects will create a legacy of skilled and passionate guardians of our coastal heritage.”

Made possible by National Lottery players

- Watch House, Tynemouth Volunteer Life Brigade: grant of £245,700 awarded in 2014
- Protecting, preserving, interpreting and displaying historic maritime artefacts, Sunderland Volunteer Life Brigade: grant of £9,300 awarded in 2013
- Always ready for 150 years, South Shields Volunteer Life Brigade: grant of £50,500 awarded in 2015
- Reconnecting Community and Coast, Durham Heritage Coast: grant of £57,000 awarded in 2015
- Learn 2 Love, Durham Heritage Coast: grant of £25,000 awarded in 2016
- Coast Care, Northumberland Coast AONB Partnership: earmarked funding of £521,100 including a development grant of £13,500, awarded in 2015

Further information

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Lottery grant ensures historic watch house future