

## Skills for the Future, Canal & River Trust

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### Short description of the project

The Canal & River Trust is the custodian of a 200 year old 2000 mile network of canals and rivers and need more skilled people to help maintain it, both internally with our own people and externally through our contractors, and volunteers.

We have developed this programme alongside the Heritage Craft Alliance (HCA) and thanks to a HLF grant of £607,200, two new intermediate level skills awards will be introduced to bridge the gap to Level 3 in Waterway Heritage Skills, a theoretical QCF and a practical NVQ level 2 bespoke to the waterway environment.

Starting with the recruitment of 14 trainees in summer 2014, we will see over 3-4 years a total of 42 individuals undertaking specialist waterway heritage skills training. This will also provide training routes for 100 of our own people. Trainees will benefit from on-site training on the waterways including a two weeks placement with a contractor and some time in our lock gate workshop, as well as training in HCA's workshops.

### What would have happened without this project?

The heritage and construction industries, backed by various studies have identified a lack of skilled craftsmen in the heritage sector.

The Trust wants this scheme to act as a career pathway for its operational staff, new trainees and all who work in its sector, and to use these new awards to raise the standard of work in the areas of identified need, working with 200 year old brickwork, use of lime mortar, stonemasonry and carpentry.

The Trust also wants to diversify the range of people working in the canal heritage sector; it plans to target groups that are underrepresented in the heritage workforce: young people, ethnic minorities and women. Canal & River Trust wants the available workforce to reflect the communities the canals serve.

### What has the project achieved, or difference has it made?

There is widespread support within the Trust to mentor individuals through this programme, demonstrating a wide recognition of the value of the historic canal network and the need for it to be cared for by skilled people.

These new awards gives recognition to the staff currently working on the waterways and it gives opportunities to individuals to train up.

The new awards have been developed and a part time project manager has been appointed. He will deliver this HLF project, oversee the project, recruit individuals and coordinate their training.

### **What were the main lessons learnt or challenges overcome?**

The programme will be fully monitored and reviewed on an on-going basis. This will allow the Trust to maintain standards and quality throughout the roll out of this project. Any difficulties or challenges that may arise along the way will be captured and addressed accordingly to ensure that the programme remains fit for purpose at all times.

The Trust has extensive experience of monitoring project outputs and outcomes not least through previous HLF and Regional Development Agency funded projects. The Trust will assess the success of the project against forecast outputs and outcomes, quantitatively in terms of throughput, accreditation achieved and demographics but also qualitatively in terms of social outcomes.

### **What is the future of the project?**

This scheme will bring new people into the heritage sector and raise awareness of the canal network heritage value. Trainees will obtain valued Heritage skills and qualifications that will allow them to take up potential employment not only with the Trust, but also within the heritage sector.

The Trust feels that the project will remain relevant and sustainable due too:

- Introduction of new qualifications in the sector.
- Qualified trainees with the knowledge to pass on their skills to others.
- Roll out of both Trust and Contractor staff engaging with the formal training.
- Raise the profile of both heritage protection and the need for traditional skills.
- A change in attitude in terms of heritage skills with the potential for development of further training and skills opportunities.

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