

REPORT OF DISCOVERY TEAM

SUBJECT: SKILLS IN ACTION TRAINEESHIP – PROJECT REVIEW

Purpose of Report

To provide an update and review of the National Park Authority's traineeship scheme, Skills in Action.

Introduction/Background

Skills in Action is a three year project supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund's Skills for the Future programme. There are three delivery partners; Brecon Beacon National Park Authority, Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority, Torfaen County Borough Council.

The Skills in Action traineeship has provided 12 annual placements each year since 2014, giving those selected hands-on work based experience in conservation/ estate management. In total 36 individuals have benefitted with 15 of those working with PCNPA over that period.

Central to the 'traineeship offer' is the attainment of a Level 2 City and Guilds qualification in conservation management combined with the opportunity to learn new skills and acquire knowledge through working with National Park estate/conservation management teams.

The traineeship is aimed at those interested in pursuing a career in practical conservation/estate management or similar areas of work. The project aims to recruit primarily from local populations and award placements to those who seem most likely to benefit from the opportunity. The majority of trainees recruited on to the project have been under 25, most without higher level qualifications relevant to gaining employment in this sector. The traineeship provides individuals with the skills and experience that are essential to be successful in obtaining employment within this highly competitive sector.

Trainees accepted onto the scheme work alongside Pembrokeshire Coast National Park Authority warden teams for most of their traineeship year, but also benefit from placements with other organisations and projects that help develop specific skills, such as hedge laying. Opportunities are also provided for individuals to gain additional experience/skills in the heritage management sector, working with rangers and environmental educators for example.

To date all 10 of the previous trainees have gone into work or higher education on the back of their traineeship. Of our current trainees; two Tom's, Matt, Rhianna and Jess, two have already managed to secure employment – Rhianna working as a ranger for the Wildlife Trusts on the Scilly Isles and Tom Gilbert as a warden with PCNPA. The remaining trainees continue to enjoy their traineeship year in Pembrokeshire Coast National Park, finishing at the end of August 2017

Comparisons

The Skills in Action traineeship is funded through the Heritage Lottery Fund's Skills for the Future fund. As such it is one of a suite of projects that has similar goals in terms of providing training opportunities associated with the heritage sector. Not all projects focus on providing estate/conservation management training. Other funded projects cover a broad range of heritage skills.

Brecon Beacons NPA is the lead partner for the project and as such runs a scheme that is very similar to that which is run in Pembrokeshire, with 12 month traineeships offered, working alongside National Park estate/conservation management teams with additional external training offered (including a Level 2 accredited conservation management qualification).

Elsewhere in the UK, one other National Park in northern England was funded through the most recent round of Skills for the Future funding – the funding for this round is drawing to a close now with some projects already having been completed.

Table 1 Examples of projects funded in the last round of HLF Skills for the Future projects

Organisation	Location	Heritage sector	Grant
Eastside Community Heritage	London	Cultures & Memories	£243,400
Leeds City Council	Yorkshire	Historic Buildings	£845,200
The Prince's Foundation for Building Community	England/Scotland	Historic Buildings	£778,500
Boiler Engineering Skills Training Trust	South West/West Midlands/Wales	Industrial, Maritime & Transport	£490,500
Ulster Wildlife Trust	Northern Ireland	Land & biodiversity	£371,200
Ambios (LEMUR+)	South West/West	Land & biodiversity	£568,800
Brecon Beacons National Park Authority	Wales	Land & biodiversity	£916,900
St Edmundsbury Borough Council	East of England	Museums, libraries, archives	£101,500
Museums Galleries Scotland	Scotland	Museums, libraries, archives	£432,900
Bodleian Library	South East	Museums, libraries and archives	£292,000

Locally the National Trust offers year-long unpaid volunteer placements, with accommodation provided. These are popular amongst graduates seeking a career in the sector, but less popular with local young people. Elsewhere there are no similar schemes in West Wales.

Options

The Skills in Action scheme was project funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The present grant is due to be spent by early 2018. This includes a shortened Year 4 traineeship, likely to be available for applicants from October 2017, but we are awaiting Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) approval for this final phase of the project.

A recent application to the new round of HLF Skill for the Future funding was turned down by the grant making body. At the moment there are few external funding options available that would allow us to continue the existing scheme beyond the early part of next year

The traineeship scheme has proved successful in providing routes to employment for those taking part, but also in allowing the National Park Authority to make an identifiable contribution in providing opportunities for young people locally.

Financial considerations

As can be seen from the table above, the costs of providing 36 traineeship placements over three years is high – close to £1,000,000 when taking into account the matched funding provided by the authorities taking part. The bulk of this cost can be attributed to the salary costs of trainees, with a lesser amount spent on training provided and the costs of support staff.

Risk considerations

The Skills in Action scheme has been well received by local organisations involved in education, training and recruitment/employment. Pembrokeshire College, Future Works and local employers such as National Trust support the scheme.

Compliance

The project supports the NPA's duty to 'foster the social and economic well-being of local communities'.

Human Rights/Equality issues

The project supports the National Parks Equality Plan. In this cohort we were able to recruit 2 female and 3 male trainees. The recruitment process places an emphasis on the aptitude of candidates rather than existing skill sets and experience. In Pembrokeshire the majority of recruits were under the age of 25, all except one of the 15 trainees recruited by PCNPA were locally based, either in Pembrokeshire or the surrounding areas of West Wales.

Biodiversity implications/Sustainability appraisal

The work of the trainees contributes to the practical management of the National Park. Working alongside the warden teams the trainees are involved in access work and conservation management tasks.

Welsh Language statement

The project provides the opportunity for Welsh speaking trainees to work alongside Welsh speaking Warden teams.

Recommendation

For information only, no decision required

Author: Graham Peake, Discovery Team Leader (grahamp@pembrokeshirecoast.org.uk)

Consultees: Tom Iggleden, Skills in Action Co-ordinator: