

Heritage Counts

2008

North East – Further Case Studies

Local councils, encouraged by central government, are working with local partners and local people to create what are referred to as 'sustainable communities'. A sustainable community is one where people live, work and thrive in high quality places and where there is a balance in the environmental, social and economic components that define an area.

With case studies drawn from across the region, this year's report demonstrates the fundamental role played by the North East region's historic environment sector in creating and underpinning sustainable places and in delivering environmental, social, and economic well being.

ENVIRONMENTAL WELL BEING

On the basis of widely accepted predictions, environmental issues such as climate change are likely to prove detrimental to the historic environment as well as natural environment. Therefore many historic environment organisations are exploring ways to reduce fuel consumption, increase energy efficiency and recycle in order to promote environmental well being for both the natural and historic environment alike.

Education plays an important role, and the historic environment sector is doing its part to educate the public about environmental issues through special projects and exhibitions, designed to inform and challenge. However, the historic environment sector faces its own challenges for historic assets (whether sites or artefacts) are themselves a finite resource that cannot easily be replaced. The historic environment sector therefore plays an important role in ensuring that they are protected conserved and well managed.

Collections Care

The North East Collections Care framework is run in partnership with MLA North East, the North East Regional Museums Hub (through the Renaissance programme) and Durham University Library. It provides support to museums, libraries and archives in maintaining their collections, including environmental surveys, advice and guidance, disaster planning and the creation of disaster response kits.

Training has been a key part of the programme, including disaster management so that participants can undertake practical hands-on training in dealing with flood and fire damaged collections. Museums have also benefited from specialist cleaning kits issued on the completion of their training sessions.

Clean, Green Energy

The National Trust wants to play its part in combating climate change by becoming less dependent on fossil fuels. To do this, it is concentrating on using less energy by increasing the energy efficiency of its operations. The Trust is also exploring how to generate renewable energy at its properties and make more use of the natural resources all around us.

At the National Trust's Office at Scots' Gap, a biomass boiler is being installed to heat the premises, using woodchip from the nearby Wallington Estate. On the Farne Islands, ground mounted photovoltaic panels provide electricity, with similar panels also used at Cragside.

Against the elements at Dunstanburgh

Perched high on a cliff, Dunstanburgh Castle has stood on the wild and windswept Northumberland coast for more than 700 years, its sandstone walls battered by saltwater and harsh North Sea winds. Centuries of weathering have taken their toll on many of the huge blocks of stone that went into the construction of the castle's outer walls, which date to the late 14th century.

Dunstanburgh Castle is owned by the National Trust and managed and maintained by English Heritage. Work is being undertaken to replace the eroded stone work using traditional materials and techniques to replicate the design and quality of the original architecture. This work will enable visitors to better picture how the castle once looked, whilst also securing the future of this structure for future generations to enjoy.

Tony Wilkinson, a 19-year-old apprentice, is learning the traditional skills of cutting, dressing and fitting the new stone. Tony is an apprentice to stonemason David France, who is working in partnership with specialist company St Astier of Seaham to carry out the repairs.

BIG County at Woodhorn

BIG County is a fascinating exploration of the county of Northumberland through a wonderful collection of maps, many of which have been drawn from Northumberland County Archives, which are located at Woodhorn. The maps on display range from archaeological maps showing ancient sites to brand new maps showing the Northumberland coastline the impacts of predicted climatic changes. The maps help to graphically illustrate the close interrelationship between people and the environment in Northumberland.

Central to the exhibition is a massive three dimensional quilted map giving a stunning birds-eye view of the North East landscape. "The Big Quilt", is based on a satellite image of the North East of England and was designed and hand stitched by three artists from

the Northgate Arts Project. Visitors can also see how one town prepared itself for WWII air raids and later how it took measures to protect against possible nuclear attack. Industrial heritage is also shown on plans of rail networks, lead mines and collieries.

Gibside's Larder

The National Trust property of Gibside, near Gateshead, launched The Larder in February 2008 as an extension to its gift shop. The Larder offers an extended food range and supports National Trust tenant farmers, regional and national, as well as local food producers within a 50 mile radius.

The property's proximity to a large urban conurbation allows it to play a vital role in encouraging and supporting healthier lifestyles. The high quality produce available through this small outlet will give people more choice and will bring rural suppliers into urban areas. Furthermore - fresh local and seasonal food means that less food miles are travelled and less CO2 emitted.

Tackling increased rainfall

Extreme rainfall causes problems for historic buildings, where the gutters and drains cannot handle the volume of water, where floods damage the property, or where footpaths are washed away. But increased rainfall can also have damaging effect upon our natural heritage as well and just one bad season can damage a thriving bird population extensively.

The National Trust has been working to protect birds' nests at risk of flooding on the Farne Islands. Following heavy rainstorms in 2008, National Trust wardens braved the torrential rain to save Tern eggs from being washed away by digging trenches to drain the water.

Darlington Great Crested Newt

The Great Crested Newt is the largest and most endangered species of newt in Great Britain. The species has been singled out as a priority for conservation action, as part of the Government's Biodiversity Action Plan. A program of mapping the newts in County Durham has been started and with public involvement, aims to update current information about their whereabouts and numbers, while also increasing awareness.

The project has been funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund, the Durham Wildlife Trust and Darlington Borough Council. A full time Project Officer has been appointed to coordinate the collection of data and to organise community events based around the Great Crested Newt. Education plays a significant part in this natural heritage project. From schools to council officers, it is hoped that increased knowledge of wetland conservation will increase public support a more a sustainable approach to future development.

Heritage Trees of the Tees

Heritage trees are an important part of the identity of the Tees Valley and are strongly linked to biodiversity priorities. Funded by Heritage Lottery Fund the 'Heritage Trees of the Tees' project aims to involve local communities in creating a record of the important trees found in the Tees Valley, to encourage a sense of ownership and stewardship whilst also raising awareness of conservation issues.

This has involved a series of opportunities for the community, such as seed gathering and story-telling events. The project aims to ensure the future of these trees, through education and interpretation, improving environmental awareness amongst participating communities, as well as improving recreational access for local people in the Tees Valley. It is co-ordinated by North East Community Forest Development and Tees Forest and will continue until 2009.

Seaton Delaval

Seaton Delaval Hall was built in 1719 for Admiral George Delaval by famous architect Sir John Vanbrugh. Despite having survived two major fires and two world wars, its future is now uncertain. There is a very real risk that this estate will be broken up, losing the great potential for visitor access and community use. The atmosphere of this special part of Northumberland's heritage could also be ruined by inappropriate development.

The National Trust is campaigning to raise enough funding to take this property into the nation's care - but to do this it needs to £6.3m to save Seaton Delaval Hall as a hub for the local community and a place for everyone to enjoy. To visit the National Trust's campaign site, go to:

http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/main/w-trust/w-support/w-donations/w-appeals-campaigns/w-appeals_and_campaigns/w-appeals-sdlh.htm

SOCIAL WELL BEING

The historic environment shapes people's everyday lives in terms of the neighbourhoods in which they live, the places in which they work, the way in which they learn and their spaces for recreation. The historic environment is also central to identity as a force that can bring communities together through a sense of mutual belonging, common history or joint interest. Historic environment organisations help to strengthen these links. From providing attractive places to live and work to museum displays about the local area, the historic environment plays a fundamental role in social well being.

Young Parents at Woodhorn

Young Ashington Parents was set up by children's charity NCH to support, inform and promote parenting and life skills for teenage parents, whilst also encouraging greater self-confidence and self-belief to enable the young people to return to education and employment.

Woodhorn Museum ran a Christmas crafts project for a group of young parents from Ashington to make gifts for themselves or others that were inspired by the museum's collections. Through a series of fun and enjoyable activities, participants learnt new craft

skills such as jewellery making, handbag and shoe design and hairdressing to help with their esteem and confidence.

Audience Development at Killhope and Shildon

Two North East museums have been exploring ways to develop their provision for young people with help from the Regional Youth Work Unit (RYWU). The project aimed to develop younger audiences in the two museums by building relationships between local youth workers, young people and staff from participating museums (Locomotion, the National Railway Museum at Shildon and Killhope, the North of England Lead Mining Museum).

The RYWU provided training for museum staff in how to work with younger audiences and helped to pilot new ways of working through a number of small projects - tailored to each museum. Members of museum staff are now more confident and better able to provide positive activities for young people in these unique settings.

Manacles & Money

Stockton Museum, Dorman Museum and Teesside Archives in partnership with African community group Karibou developed a series of events and activities to commemorate the abolishment of the slave trade. These included: the production of a thirty minute film, the development of an exhibition, a series of workshops for school and community groups and the development of three loan boxes containing a mix of original and replica artefacts.

This project has heightened awareness of the slave trade and of related contemporary issues to young people and the wider community. It has highlighted the richness of diverse cultures, enabled the museum services to build up its collections, changed perceptions and enabled links to be forged with the local African community.

Victorian Costumes

The Victorian Costume project at Stephenson Railway Museum was a partnership project with Year Twelve fashion students at Whitley Bay High School, which aimed to create resources to be used for subsequent learning events at the Stephenson Railway Museum.

Angela Noble, a freelance textile artist, worked with pupils to create three male and three female Victorian costumes. The costumes were used for the Santa special events and then as educational resources. Students were photographed wearing the costumes and the images and resources have been integrated into the learning delivery at the Museum.

ECONOMIC WELL BEING

Heritage can play a significant role in helping to regenerate communities and a great deal of heritage funding has this goal in mind. Successful regeneration often requires finding viable and sustainable economic or community uses for heritage assets whose original use has disappeared.

The region's museums, libraries and archives also have a role to play in regeneration, contributing to tourism, education and improved quality of life through increased cultural and leisure opportunities. In these ways, heritage plays an important role in economic well being.

Woodhorn Our Woodhorn

Based at Woodhorn Northumberland Museum, Archives and Country Park, the Woodhorn Our Woodhorn (WOW) project aimed to re-engage people in Wansbeck with their heritage, their mining ancestors and their work ethos, all of which used to be very strong in this area before suffering from industrial decline and loss of confidence. As a result of the project, the participants were able to gain greater self-confidence, learn new skills and find out more about their past and local history.

A specially created website www.iralightman.com/Family-Trees.html enabled local people to use their family surnames to create a family tree. Participants were also encouraged to visit the archive study centre at Woodhorn to carry out further research. The trees were reproduced in a digital format as well as being printed on "tree shirts". They were also assembled into a forest of trees which became a public art work displayed at the museum during summer 2008.

NEET Focus on Employment Rights

The Remembering Slavery Exhibitions at the Laing Art Gallery provided a focus for a NEET (Not in Training Education or Employment) course for young people at Gateshead College. The group visited the used the exhibitions and the topic of slavery as a focus for exploring issues such as employment rights, using activity sheets to encourage participants to learn from the displays. The gallery provided an opportunity for these young people to engage in positive activities, to learn new skills and develop their confidence in a non-traditional learning environment.

Further case study resources

Further case studies are available from the following websites:

<http://research.mla.gov.uk/case-studies/>
<http://www.helm.org.uk/server/show/nav.19730>
<http://www.hlf.org.uk/English/InYourArea/NorthEast/>
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/>

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