

Background to the Heritage Grant Application

As part of our mission to advance training in the craft of dry stone walling and conserve, protect and improve the built landscape, the Dry Stone Walling Association (DSWA) has applied to the Heritage Lottery Fund for a grant to establish a cohesive training structure to enhance career prospects in dry stone walling, thereby providing income opportunities whilst also maintaining the landscape for future generations to enjoy.



Project Objectives:

- a) Formulate high quality work based training programmes to develop skills in dry stone walling where there is a proven need i.e. in north west England
- b) Promote the transfer of knowledge by experts to the next generation
- c) Ensure the continuity of qualified instructors and examiners to administer the DSWA qualification framework and verify standards of work in the north of England and southern Scotland
- d) Broaden the knowledge and appeal of dry stone walling as a heritage craft
- e) Involve a wide range of people of all ages and backgrounds in dry stone walling training and community projects.
- f) Create a sustainable training & education hub offering knowledge, expertise and training opportunities to national conservation bodies, employment organisations, heritage groups, and individuals.
- g) Develop and deliver an educational programme on the built landscape for schools and colleges
- h) Monitor the quality of training delivery and standards of assessment

Delivery of Development Phase

Having been successful with the initial application for a Heritage Grant, DSWA embarked on an eight month development period with the objective of producing a robust second round application including detailed Action and Activity Plans. This was achieved by firstly establishing the existing provisions and practices, then researching the proposed project in detail, consulting external organisations and professionals and developing systems to aid the delivery of the project.

Detailed analysis of the demographic of professional dry stone wallers in the North West highlighted the need to encourage more young people to take up a career in the traditional craft of dry stone walling. The development of the Training Bursary project is vital to redressing the balance and ensuring that sufficient professional craftsmen are secured for the future of the craft.



Consultation with educational bodies revealed that very little information on the built landscape and traditional skills is covered within the school curriculum or at further education level. It was felt by those consulted that it is important for an appreciation of our landscape heritage to be established at an early stage. The education programme linked with community involvement will increase awareness of and attachment with the landscape and traditional skills.

In September 2014 the DSWA held a Training Conference to bring together the main organisations and individuals that had an interest in the delivery of the Built Landscape Heritage Education and Training Project. This was the most beneficial and effective way of disseminating our proposals, generating discussion and creating links with named individuals within organisations. There was a clear “Buy in” to our project as a result of the Conference.



Review

Although the Development Phase involved planning many different aspects of the project from recruitment of trainees to planning community involvement, the process of working through proposed activities, considering their benefits, feasibility and finances focussed attention on the importance of delivering against the project outcomes. By involving others outside DSWA and by looking for volunteer help from within DSWA we have secured commitment and support for the project. The Conference in September was an example of how much progress can be made by just pulling people together and inviting discussion.