

Developing heritage skills for economic regeneration

Leeds City Council recognised there was a shortage of heritage construction skills in the city for repair and maintenance of pre-1919 buildings, of which there are over 74,000 in the city.

In May, it was awarded initial backing under the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) Skills for the Future programme and a development grant of £34,500 to prepare a full bid for £810,300 to spend on practical heritage skills training in the city.

The project will work with Leeds College of Building and York College to offer work-based training for 25 young people and career changers in NVQ3 in Heritage Construction Skills, along with short craft-based skills training for SMEs already in the construction industry. There will be a practical focus on the heritage sector with specialist training in stone masonry, lime mortars, roofing, carpentry, brickwork, electrical and plumbing work. The project will also give trainees complimentary business administration and ICT skills, in addition to training the trainers so that trainees benefit from the latest best practice.

Supplying new trainees to the sector is important but the project also recognises that the demand side needs addressing too. So the project will provide training for construction specifiers so they can advise property owners on how to build in the right heritage skills into their construction schemes at an early stage.

Councillor Lucinda Yeadon, Leeds City Council executive board member with responsibility for leisure and skills, said: “We want to help strengthen a key sector of the Leeds economy by addressing an unmet training need within the heritage sector. We also want to ensure that we help businesses to continue to compete in the sector by up-skilling their workforce and ensure that young people are given the opportunity to learn new, specific heritage skills to meet the increasing demand.”



A demonstration of wood window repairs for home owners in Leeds © Leeds City Council

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