

## **Sustainable Development through Heritage and Education: *The New Peterborough Effect.***

### **Abstract:**

This article argues that engagement with heritage by educational organisations is an effective tool in transforming the lives of young people and developing sustainable futures for England's urban areas (UNESCO, 2011).

"The Peterborough Effect" was a slogan employed by the Peterborough Development Corporation in the 1970s and 1980s to promote one of the most successful New Town developments in post-war Britain and to encourage economic investment in the city from external businesses (Bendixson, 1988). Nearly 40 years later the Development Corporation has been superseded by Opportunity Peterborough, an urban regeneration company that recognises the role of heritage and education in the sustainable development of the city (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011).

Since 2009 Opportunity Peterborough and Peterborough Regional College have worked in partnership to deliver a project initially funded by the Big Lottery which seeks to build the confidence and practical skills of "young people who are: de-motivated, vulnerable, disengaged or likely to disengage" (Peterborough Regional College, 2010, p unknown). In 2010 a group of young people successfully completed a dry stone walling course, and subsequent groups have engaged in similar activities including restoring a dry stone wall

at John Clare's Cottage, a regionally significant heritage site. The project has also grown to include a hedge laying course; a nearly extinct traditional rural skill in England.

This article is presented in three parts; the first part considers the wider academic, social, and political contexts within which this project was delivered. The second part of the article is an evaluative case study demonstrating how the heritage skills project impacted positively on the lives of young people from the city, and on the local historic environment. The final element consists of a reflective summary of the project by several of the young people that were part of the project in 2012. It is intended that this innovative approach offers three perspectives (that of the academic, the practitioner, and the participant) on the role of heritage education projects in sustainable development.

### **Introduction: Sustainable Development through Heritage and Education**

It is generally accepted that the term heritage is complex and multifaceted, including both tangible and intangible aspects in the form of material culture and in human behaviours and practices (UMASS, 2012 and ICOM, 2012). The academic debate surrounding what heritage actually comprises in terms of the tangible and intangible began in the 1980s and is therefore well established and extensive; with explanations agreeing that it can include anything from historic buildings and parks and gardens to ideas, memories and language (Howard, 2003 and UMASS, 2012). Its relationship with individual, local, regional and national identity has also been explored in depth by several academics (Brisbane and Wood, 1996, Lowenthal, 1985 and 1998, Howard, 2003) and the impact of nostalgia on heritage is also a well covered topic (Hewison, 1987, Lowenthal 1989, Walsh, 1992, Bennett, 1995). In the last decade the discourse surrounding the nature of heritage has become more abstract, with further consideration given to its non fiscal value,

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to whom it belongs, and its relationship to the past, present and future (Brisbane and Wood, 1996, UMASS, 2012, and ICOM, 2012). Current debates on heritage focus on it being a contemporary activity or topic for public debate, a tool for urban and regional planning, and its role in the social development of individuals, communities, and even nations (UMASS, 2012 and Harrison, 2012). Heritage-led regeneration and its social impact has also become an important debate. In 2003 the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister published the report *Sustainable Communities: Building for the Future* which identified the opportunities sustainable communities can offer groups, families, and individuals (ODPM, 2003). This concept has led to discussions about how heritage can play a leading role in the creation of sustainable communities, social and economic regeneration, and indeed to debates about the role of young people in this development (Ela Palmer Heritage, 2008).

Although broad scale heritage regeneration programmes such as Newcastle's Grainger Town Development and Nottingham's Lace Market project had transformed the social and economic performance of these urban areas and their populations, (English Heritage, date unknown) the power of heritage to transform individual lives was first recognised within the museum sector. When New Labour came to power in 1997 under the leadership of Blair the role of museums was redefined as they changed from repositories of objects to "agents of social inclusion" (Sandell, 1998:1). From the late 1990s onwards many museums began to focus on attracting new audiences and previously excluded groups, to become active partners in the communities within which they were situated, and to develop their education provision in the widest sense (Hunt, 2012). It is clear from public information and academic research that the social inclusion agenda brought new audiences into museums during this period and encouraged their growth into sustainable entities; for example in 2002 Ipsos MORI conducted a survey into the impact of free entry to national museums which stated that in that year "the DCMS announced

a 62% increase in visitor numbers in the seven months since entry charges were scrapped" (Ipsos Mori, 2002:1), and that there had also "been a rise in museum visiting among those in DE social classes" (Ipsos Mori, 2002:4). Young people were quickly identified as an excluded, or hard to reach, group by government departments, advisory bodies, and institutions themselves. There was also rapid recognition of the potential to use museums as a tool for developing a "sense of place, belonging and identity" with this group (MLA, 2012).<sup>2</sup> Good practice in audience development and becoming socially inclusive for the benefit of individuals and communities was primarily informed by ground breaking research by academics such as Hooper-Greenhill, Dodd, and Sandell, based at Leicester University's Research Centre for Museums and Galleries. Academics from the Centre authored several reports which changed the face of museum practice, such as the GLLAM Report in 2000 (which was part funded by several large urban museums), the report *Perspectives on Museums, Galleries and Social Inclusion* in 2001, and the evaluative report on *The Impact of the DFES Museums and Galleries Education Programme* in 2002. These reports critically evaluated traditional museum practice, forcing practitioners to re-evaluate the role of museums and to explore ways of developing a more active role within society that was focused on empowerment and engagement for a variety of people rather than formal education. In the February 2012 edition of the Museum Journal the transformation of museums into community hubs, and the positive economic and social impact of this shift was explored in the context of volunteer run museums and Cameron's Conservative Party's (now defunct) *Big Society* concept. The article demonstrated that in just fifteen years the social inclusion agenda had grown to encompass economic regeneration (Weinstein, 2012). The Museum of East Anglian Life in Stowmarket, Suffolk, is an example of how social inclusion evolved in this way. Often highlighted as leading institution in terms of good practice, the

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<sup>2</sup> This webpage was not available by January 2014 as the Museums, Libraries, and Archives Council was closed in 2012.

museum runs a work-based learning programme for people who are in long term unemployment, and a successful social enterprise business which supplies floral displays for the town. The museum also disseminates this good practice and informs current academic debates on the role of museums by producing evaluative reports on its work (Museum of East Anglian Life, 2012). The approach to community engagement and social and economic development that is well established in museums has recently cascaded out to the wider heritage sector. Recent work by academics based at Newcastle University's Centre for Urban and Regional Development Studies has sought to explore how young people feel towards, and engage with, their local historic environment. This research was groundbreaking as in 2009 when a literature review was carried out for the *Sense of Place Social Capital and the Historic Environment* project it was discovered that "there was virtually no earlier work on the views of young people on their local environment" (Bradley et al, 2011:7). Their 2011 report, *Assessing the Importance and Value of Historic Buildings to Young People*, produced for English Heritage, stated that their research identified the importance of the historic environment to young people, and its power to instil a sense of pride and attachment to the local environment in this group. However, it also made an important correlation between poverty and reduced levels of engagement with the historic built environment in groups of young people (Bradley et al, 2011).

The debate around heritage skills and their use as a tool in sustainability is far less developed than that surrounding museums, and projects such as Peterborough Regional College's *Care and Repair* programme appeared to be rare at the time of writing this article. Discussions around the need for the reinvigoration of traditional heritage skills and building crafts rose to prominence with the 2004 report, *Crafts in English Countryside: Towards a Future*, edited by E.J.T Collins. This report was very much set in the rural context, as its title suggests, with little appreciation for the impact that the crafts and skills assessed in the report could

have on young people living in urban areas. However, the report did acknowledge that whilst the skills identified in the report were inextricably linked to the rural and agriculture, they were often located in the more populated areas associated with the rural such as villages, market towns, and even suburbia (Collins, (ed), 2004). The report assessed a range of heritage crafts and skills in danger of disappearing including heritage building crafts such as dry stone walling, along with the profiles of the types of people working in the sector. In 2004 people working in this sector were, surprisingly, from a middle class background and had often worked in other professions before becoming involved in heritage craft trades (Collins, (ed), 2004). The report did not identify or discuss any schemes involving disengaged young people with heritage crafts and skills. In 2002 the National Training Heritage Group (NHTG) was formed as a reaction to a recognised shortage of craftspeople specialising in heritage building skills. In 2005 the group commissioned a report entitled *The Skills Needs Analysis of the Built Heritage Sector* to inform its practice and training agenda (NHTG, 2005). In 2008 this report was reviewed and updated and the report commented on the perception of people that there was a lack of interest in traditional building skills by young people, that property owners were "sceptical both of the skills levels of younger recruits and of their willingness to work at the salaries that can be offered for this kind of employment" (NHTG, 2008:53), and that they were often unwilling to let young people work on their properties. These findings informed the forward plan of the organisation positively, with them agreeing to encourage engagement with the historic environment by young people "by increasing interactive demonstrations by contractors and craftspeople within schools, at skills events or as part of historic environment and construction sector education and outreach programmes" (NHTG, 2008:145), and by developing more links with formal education programmes, and vocational training such as apprenticeships, to meet employer needs through the NVQ level 3 Heritage Skills Qualification and the NVQ level 4 Senior Craftsperson Qualification (NHTG, 2008).

However, there was no clear provision in this report for using heritage as a tool for social and economic development, and whilst this might be considered as beyond the organisation's remit, it could also be argued that this is an area that should have been considered as the organisation discusses Further Education (FE) at length in its report, and inclusion has always been a key principle of FE. Arguably, this exclusion may reflect the demographic of those involved in heritage crafts and skills as identified by the *Crafts in the English Countryside* report (Collins, (ed), 2004).

It is clear from the limited material exploring traditional crafts and building techniques available at the time of writing this article that organisations did not fully appreciate the extent to which heritage skills might be used to engage and inspire young people and to build sustainable communities. It is likely that this occurred because the industry was clearly responding to a crisis linked to the survival of skills and economic stress and needed to move beyond this to be able to develop a more inclusive and innovative approach to education and engagement. There was clearly a need for appropriately qualified young people to move into the heritage building and craft skills sector, to replace an aging workforce (Collins, (ed), 2004), and whilst the NHTG were focussed on traditional and formal educational routes in acquiring this workforce, there was also an opportunity for the FE sector to develop their provision in this area, particularly considering non-traditional learners.

It is within the framework of using heritage to engage disaffected young people that in 2009 the *Care and Repair* project was developed by Alice Kershaw (Opportunity Peterborough) and Jane Hodges (Peterborough Regional College). The project also aimed to respond to the needs of the historic local environment in Peterborough and a local shortage in appropriately skilled craftspeople, whilst recognising the opportunity for innovation within the British heritage skills sector.

## **Introduction: Peterborough**

Peterborough is a unitary authority area located in the East of England, with a compact urban centre in a predominantly rural area. In 2011 it was estimated that 173,000 people lived in the city, with 66% of the population of working age and 40% of the population under the age of 29 (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011).

The city has a history of human habitation stretching back over 5000 years, due to its location on a clay island surrounded by resource-rich fenland. There are over 1,000 listed buildings in the city, with a quarter of the 67 Grade I list entries located within the Medieval cathedral precincts in the city centre. Peterborough is not a homogenous city, and the villages and settlements that surround it vary greatly in character. The city has 29 Conservation Areas, predominantly located in rural areas with the exception of the city centre, a Conservation Area designated as *at risk* by English Heritage, the Central Park Conservation Area, and the Victorian New England railway cottages in the north of the city centre (English Heritage, 2011).

Despite its long history and important Medieval and Victorian buildings Peterborough is synonymous with the British government's post-war New Town rebuilding programme. The city was designated a New Town in 1968 and the Peterborough Development Corporation was established to build new townships, to attract businesses and industry to area, and to increase the size of the city (Bendixson, 1988). The result of this was that rather than traditional models of growth with gradual expansion from a historic core, the city experienced forced development across a wider area, creating a dispersed population of incomers without a flagship city centre. The New Town development transformed Peterborough from an urban centre that functioned more like a market town into a bustling modern city only fifty minutes away from London, but it also left the city with problems of both an

abstract and practical nature (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011). For example, the city's identity is unclear from both geographical and historical perspectives, with academics questioning if it is a Medieval cathedral city, a Victorian railway city, a twentieth century New Town, or indeed all three (Hunt, 2011).

Although Peterborough has a diverse business economy and remained relatively resilient to the effects of the macro-economic crisis, the city does face social and economic challenges. In 2011 it was recognised as the 90th most deprived local authority in the country out of a total of 354 authorities, with some areas within the top 5% most deprived wards in the country. These areas are located in the central urban areas of the city and were recorded by Opportunity Peterborough in 2011 as being affected by high rates of health deprivation, with life expectancy below the national average for men and women. There were also high levels of deficiency measured on the income and employment scales, whereas the least disadvantaged areas identified were largely in the rural areas which fall within the Unitary Authority Area. Peterborough is also a designated dispersal area and home to a significant number of asylum seeking children and families. Until recently, Peterborough's Gross Value Added indicator was relatively strong and above regional and national averages, however it did dip in 2011 (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011).

The skill levels of people living in Peterborough rose throughout the 2000s; however levels in the city were still below national and regional averages in 2012. The city had a higher than average claimant count for Job Seekers Allowance in the past, which highlighted a higher degree of unemployment than in other areas of the country, but by 2012 this had fallen as the economy moved into recovery, bucking the national trend (Bowyer, 2012). More severe than unemployment alone, perhaps, was the impact of the phenomenon of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET) in the city. Whilst NEET levels were in line with

regional and national averages, there were clusters of vulnerable young people concentrated in the more deprived areas of the city such as Dogsthorpe, Paston, Ravensthorpe, and Orton Longueville. These young people, particularly those aged 16 - 18, faced real challenges in accessing educational and training opportunities and entering the city's workforce (NHS, 2007).

It was within this complex geographical and social landscape that the *Care and Repair* project was conceived, with the aim to develop the skills of young people designated as NEET in the area as part of a programme to conserve and preserve Peterborough's built historic environment. The project began in 2009 with Alice Kershaw (Opportunity Peterborough) and Jane Hodges (Peterborough Regional College) working in partnership to bid for Big Lottery *Awards for All* funding in order to train young people in heritage building crafts whilst restoring and improving the environment in the Greater Peterborough Area. The original brief from Opportunity Peterborough anticipated four key outcomes; the use of heritage as a driver for traditional skills development, the conservation of derelict dry stone walls within conservation areas, raising awareness of the value of heritage within the local population, and the breaking down of identity related barriers between urban and rural communities (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011).

This article seeks to demonstrate that in just three years this project transformed the lives of local young people and contributed to the protection of the historic environment. This is achieved through an evaluative case study of the project, demonstrating how the project contributed to the city's sustainability between 2009 and 2012 by transforming the lives of those involved and contributing to the restoration and preservation of Peterborough's historic environment. Finally, reflections by the 2012 cohort involved in the project are provided to reaffirm the success of the project between 2009 and 2012. They are not interwoven into the text as they provide far more powerful testimonies when read individually, and

have had little editorial intervention apart from spelling and some grammar which is denoted by the use of brackets. The article concludes with the argument that heritage can be a powerful tool in transforming the lives and prospects of young people and can contribute to the sustainability of urban environments in Britain.

### **Case Study: The *Care and Repair* Dry Stone Walling Project**

As part of the heritage regeneration programme established by Opportunity Peterborough, English Heritage and Peterborough City Council, a pilot dry stone walling project, called *Care and Repair* was devised by Alice Kershaw and Jane Hodges in 2009. It was planned that this project would be delivered through a partnership between local education provider Peterborough Regional College and not-for-profit economic development company Opportunity Peterborough, with initial funding from the Big Lottery *Awards for All* programme. The project aimed to provide on-site practical training in heritage skills from experts in the field, in primarily rural Conservation Area locations within the Peterborough Unitary Authority Area, targeting young people designated as NEET. It also aimed to create a sustainable future for the heritage sector in Peterborough by increasing the local skills base. This project also aimed to bring young people from the urban centre of Peterborough into contact with those living in the rural hinterland of the city (Opportunity Peterborough, 2009).

The need to focus on dry stone walling as a rural skill for development was informed by an important aspect of the area's built historic environment; the use of oolitic limestone as an urban and rural building material. There was also an existing survey - *The Ufford Wall Survey, 2009* - that identified the need for extensive repairs to traditional limestone stone boundary walls within the Unitary Authority Area (Ufford Parish Council, 2009). As Ufford sits in one of the 29 conservation areas within the authority

boundaries Ufford Parish Council identified the need to work in partnership with Peterborough City Council, English Heritage, and other bodies to assist in the repair of the walls using local, traditional, methods (Peterborough City Council, 2009). The target group for the project was determined by a number of city-wide strategies and issues. Peterborough City Council's 2008 Sustainable Community Strategy (available as a webpage) had cited "creating opportunities – tackling inequalities" as one of its key priority areas, along with improving skills and education in the city. Other objectives in the report included providing people with the skills needed to secure jobs locally, to foster a sense of pride in the city's diverse and distinctive culture, and to "pioneer a balance between rural and urban usage acknowledging that each shares issues which differ in scale and scope" (Peterborough City Council, 2008). Objectives identified for the city in the Local Area Action Plan also contributed to the decision to work with young people as it identified the need to provide this group of people with the skills needed to work in the locality and contribute to continued economic growth in the city (Peterborough City Council, 2008). The National Heritage Training Group report also identified a lack of traditional building skills in the East of England region (NHTG, 2008) and contemporary unemployment figures available from the Office of National Statistics stated that 6.8% of the total population in the Peterborough aged 16 - 65 were unemployed, and 17.1% were economically inactive in October 2009, demonstrating a need for training to help them enter employment (ONS, 2009 and Peterborough City Council, 2008). The project bid was therefore developed to address this need, as well as the social and educational needs of a large number of young people living in and around Peterborough.

It was decided that the project would work with young people between the ages of 16 and 19 designated NEET. The programme would use heritage and traditional building skills to engage the young people in learning that could lead to them progressing on

to college level courses in bricklaying, engineering, carpentry and other vocational qualifications. It was also decided it would aim to give these people the opportunity to undertake work experience in the rural hinterland that surrounds the urban city centre, which would enable them to build an emotional connection to areas of the city they might not live in or normally associate with. It was felt that the project should aim to instil a sense of pride in the young people involved and in city itself, and that they would be empowered by engaging in community work. Essentially the rural skills would be a conduit for personal growth and individual wellbeing as well as allowing young people to maximise their potential and increase their life chances. But the project would also aim to ensure the conservation and preservation of both traditional skills and Peterborough's historic environment for the future (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011).

Once the project had been approved by partners and awarded funding in February 2010 the first 15 trainees were recruited through the charity NACRO, Connexions, and Peterborough Regional College's existing links with external organisations such as the council's Youth Offending Services Team. In March 2010 the first cohort started the initial round of delivery. The project was delivered through a combination of practical skills-based training and academic classes in literacy. The training took place in or around Peterborough, including the village of Ufford and historical monument Wothorpe Towers. Alongside this, work was undertaken on the campus of Peterborough Regional College, in the precincts of Peterborough Cathedral and at Bedford Purlieus Nature Reserve in Rockingham Forest. This gave trainees the opportunity to develop an awareness of the different types of landscape character areas found within the Unitary Authority Area boundaries and gave them experience of a real working environment. During this part of the project they spent two days a week over an eight week period learning how to repair walls with experienced dry stone walling trainers, and attended literacy classes at Peterborough Regional

College on a regular basis. The group also participated in a range of other activities such as a traditional Willow weaving workshop, a capacity building training day at Ufford for Peterborough Regional College employees and partners to learn the basic aspects of dry stone walling, working with school groups visiting Bedford Purlieus Woods on the western outskirts of Peterborough, and demonstrating their skills at the 2010 Peterborough Heritage Festival; an event that attracted 10,000 visitors to the city centre (Vivacity, 2010).

The trainees' competency and skills development were assessed in a range of ways, both informally and formally. Informal assessment took place through the production of a display about their work, a presentation to the partners in the scheme (including the Opportunity Peterborough Board of Directors), a project record book, and a learning diary. Whilst these assessments were very different in nature they aimed to develop the trainees' ability to engage in reflection, their sense of responsibility, and their communication skills. In terms of formal assessment 7 of the 9 trainees took the LANTRA Level 1 Dry Stone Walling Test on 28 May 2010 and all 7 passed. The following week all 9 trainees undertook and passed their CSCS card test; a necessity for those wanting to work in the British construction industry. The two students who did not take the LANTRA test did complete the traditional skills course and were awarded a college certificate for achieving this (Opportunity Peterborough, 2011). One tangible assessment of performance was of course, the reconstructed dry stone walls.

By 2012 the original March 2010 cohort had been followed by a further 4 groups undertaking similar programmes of training. Recruitment continued through the routes described earlier, but short courses in dry stone walling also attracted young people to the project. The second group started the project in June 2010 with 12 trainees. Of these 12 trainees 10 completed the course and received a qualification. There were 2 students that did not complete

the course, but rather than this being due to disengagement it can be attributed to external factors; one found full-time work halfway through the course and the other left the area (Peterborough Regional College, 2010). By March 2011 8 of the trainees who had completed the course had progressed onto other courses at Peterborough Regional College, including Uniformed Services, Bricklaying, Construction, Carpentry and Joinery. One student progressed on to a full-time Princes Trust Diploma and at the time of writing was waiting to see if his application for an apprenticeship had been successful. The third cohort started in June 2011, whilst this group was not supported by Big Lottery funding the good practice in terms of teaching, learning, and assessment developed during the pilot was applied to this group. Of the 6 trainees that started this round of the project, 5 successfully completed it, and in September 2011 these 5 young people were engaged in full time education at Peterborough Regional College on Construction or Carpentry courses. One student did not complete the course, having left Peterborough because of family, drug and alcohol related problems (Peterborough Regional College, 2011).

The retention levels of 80% and above and the high achievement and progression rates clearly demonstrate that the project was successful in terms of empowering the trainees to further develop skills and achieve qualifications needed to work in the local construction industry, and thus contribute to economic recovery in Peterborough, and a sustainable future for the city. The project also resulted in the restoration and conservation of a key characteristic of the historic fabric of the city, with over 20 metres of wall repaired. However, this project had several aims that could not be measured through statistical analysis. The project had sought to aid participants in feeling a sense of pride in themselves and their city, had aimed to help them to develop personally, and had said it would contribute to the preservation of an important part of Peterborough's heritage by increasing an interest in it by young people. In order to capture this information, the trainees

needed to be asked about their feelings, attitudes, experiences and personal growth, and the comments examined. This was undertaken in February 2012 with the cohort on the programme at this time; several of whom also took part in shorter dry stone walling courses offered in 2011.

### **A True Measurement of Success? Reflections by Participants**

The following reflections were captured on 22<sup>nd</sup> February 2012 at Peterborough Regional College during the level 1 literacy class which formed part of the *Care and Repair* project. The cohort that contributed to this work had a mixed range of ability in terms of English language, from English as a second language to the achievement of a grade B at G.C.S.E. English Language (Forde, 2012). The group knew that someone was coming to find out about their experiences on the course for a conference paper, but they were not prepared for the writing task in advance in order to capture their honest opinions. A brief discussion about the task was held and the paper was explained to students, along with the type of narrative that we were trying capture, and the potential outcomes such as the opportunity to contribute to academic discourse on heritage and education and the chance to share their experiences with a range of people. All the students in the class agreed to write down how they had come to be on the course, what they had learnt at college, how the course had changed them, and how it had informed their career choices.

The extracts provided are presented in the students' own words; the only editing that has taken place is the spelling and some grammatical corrections contained in brackets. They provide compelling evidence that whilst most of the students started the course with little understanding of what dry stone walling was and how it related to Peterborough's local heritage, they quickly learnt how to build dry stone walls and found a new appreciation



for the built environment. There is a great sense of pride in their work, themselves, and their local area, which is clear in all the contributions. This was also evident in the classroom discussion with Tom saying that he “would do this for the rest of my life if I could”, Richard telling everyone that his screensaver on his mobile telephone was of one of the walls the group have worked on, and Phil having to be actively encouraged to put down his dry stone walling handbook to contribute to the reflective exercise. The extracts suggest a brighter future for these young people, the potential continuation of a traditional craft, and the opportunity for economic growth and social development in Peterborough. What is also clear from the reflections that these young people, labelled as NEET by the British Government and described as a problem to be tackled in policy documents (University of London, 2009), possess potential and enthusiasm that was not unlocked during their formative education, but has been awakened through their engagement with heritage.

Phil: “[I] started the course because a friend recommended it. At the start of the course [I] was not sure that I would enjoy it but when I started it turned out I found it interesting. [I] learnt a lot of things about the dry stone walling craft itself but also learnt things about heritage in general, its benefits and also how it impacts the environment and eco-system. [I] also learnt about other heritage skills. [I] have gained experience at working on site and the craft. [It] has also taken me to places that I would not have been for example John Clare[s] Cottage. [I] have a better attitude to heritage and the environment and my career plans have grown from just walling to other skills. [I] feel as though have more chance of getting a job in the art and also a better understanding of heritage. In the future I plan to work in areas such as heritage and the environment.”

Jamie and Tom: “Tom and myself both joined the rural skills course for the same reason: to advance our skills in dry stone walling. To

gain knowledge and experience and achieve our level 1 and to and to put in our first steps towards our future careers.”

Tom: “Jane came to a group of us at John Mansfield and explained what the course was about and it’s a national heritage. I was interested in keeping it going because it is a rare and existing [interesting] thing to learn and know.”

Jamie: “I got told about this course by a friend and my previous tutor Kirsty Stone. The course appealed to me as it is physical and I want to help revive a dying trade.”

Tom: “I find being out in the country and being around different parts of history very interesting and exciting because it is an opportunity that don’t always come around. Once you get into it, it really makes you feel different. When I’m home all you can think about is limestone which is what you use to build the wall, and all you want to do is build, build, build.”

Jamie: “I enjoy dry stone walling. It gives me a great sense of achievement and I truly feel proud of what I’m doing. I find building the wall quite relaxing and [it] eases my mind. I would really like the opportunity to renovate broken walls in the countryside to help rebuild parts of our British history. I want to further and widen my skills next year if there is a more advanced course.”

Jamie and Tom: “We both now feel this course has changed our way of thinking. Compared to school days both our lives have improved. We have also had a chance to meet a lot of interesting people and being out in the country all day real[ly] gives you the chance to talk.”

Richard: “Because I enjoy building walls and it is carrying on with a very old skills that helps farmers and the environment. I was at another college and didn’t know what it was. Jane told me and

I signed up. I felt like I wasn't going to like it but I stuck with it and now I do. Practical work, team work, pride."

Luke: "I'm on this course because I went to Peterborough College one night and found out about this course. I enjoy this course because I get to do dry stone walling and I get to fix bikes and do bike maintenance. I'm coming here so that I can get my level one certificate and I can go on to get a job in the future. I get a sense of achievement when I know that the work is done."

### Conclusion

This article has attempted to demonstrate that engagement with heritage by educational organisations is an effective tool in transforming the lives of young people and developing sustainable futures for England's urban areas. Whilst using heritage to engage excluded groups, including young people, for the benefit of local communities and environments is well established within the museums sector in Britain, it is clear that the heritage craft and building sector has not yet fully realised the potential of heritage to empower and educate. The *Care and Repair* project was clearly an innovation in the positive engagement of young people labelled NEET in Peterborough, and in the preservation of an important part of local heritage. It is overwhelmingly clear that in this case the young people developed specialist skills that they used to improve the local environment, and transferrable skills they can use in the workplace in the future. But perhaps more importantly they discovered a sense of pride in themselves and their city, the confidence to progress onto other courses, and they found something they could be passionate about. The empathy, understanding, and ambition stimulated in these young people through engagement with their local heritage means that Peterborough has a brighter, more sustainable future.

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