

Canal College gets first round funding



A major skills and employability programme targeting disadvantaged 16-25 year olds in Falkirk and Edinburgh came a step closer with the announcement that it has been awarded a First Round pass for a grant of £207,700 including £31,500 development funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The Canal College, which was conceived by the Waterways Trust Scotland with the support of Scottish Canals, has also been awarded funding from the European Union Interreg IVB North West Europe programme.

The Canal College will deliver environment and heritage skills and training along the Union and Forth & Clyde canals in Edinburgh and Falkirk for 144 young people culminating in two accredited qualifications.

The Canal College will also engage with, and involve, older volunteers from the local communities within Edinburgh and Falkirk and up to 500 people will benefit from the Canal College over the two year programme.

Together, the HLF and Interreg awards will enable the Waterways Trust Scotland to develop the training programme and submit a detailed application for second stage funding from HLF. If successful, the Waterways Trust Scotland will then seek further match funding and partners to deliver the College.

It is hoped that the £382,000 Canal College will open in March

2013 and run until March 2015.

Once up and running, the Interreg support, through the project Green & Blue Futures, will also facilitate exchanges on the development and delivery of Canal College with other partner organisations in Belgium, France and Ireland.

Karen Moore, Development Director, Waterways Trust Scotland, said:-

“Canal College is absolutely right for its time. Youth unemployment is at its highest level in Scotland since devolution and young people continue to find it the hardest to access what jobs there are available.

“Ever since our first Green Action skills and employability project proved that the canals can offer innovative and attractive training and employability opportunities, we have had ambitions to develop to a whole new level, in scale and scope, and make a greater difference to youngsters trying to get into employment. We have a major opportunity to do this through Canal College.

“Canal College will deliver even more than that though and we are thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund and Interreg have recognised this with such confidence. The Canal College is the perfect realisation of what the Waterways Trust Scotland is all about – connecting people with the waterways, the heritage, wildlife and recreational opportunities, in a way which delivers real, life changing benefits to them on many different levels.

“According to the Prince’s Trust Young People’s Survey October 2010, we know *that* more than a third of young people want to

volunteer in their community and be part of it. We are also seeing an increasing number of older volunteers on the Scottish canals. By extending the reach of the Canal College to everyone in the wider canal-side communities, we hope to encourage amongst all involved a continued connection and involvement with their stretch of waterway and an understanding of the heritage and many outdoor, recreational and educational opportunities for them along it.”

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said:-

“Skills are a critical element in seeing the country through this difficult economic time. People have to have the skills that employers want in order to secure a job. The Heritage Lottery Fund is delighted to give our initial support to a project which will help equip trainees for the environmental jobs market. Their newly-learned heritage skills will not only make a difference to their own lives but will play an important part in looking after our wonderful natural heritage.”

The Canal College will run six, 14 week programmes in Edinburgh and Falkirk with participants volunteering for two days each week.

The participants will gain two accredited units through the Northern Council for Further Education (NCFE). They will also receive the John Muir Award, Youth Achievement and the Saltire Volunteer Award.

Towards the end of the programme, participants will be given help with job seeking and interview skills leading to Presentation Skills certificates. They will also receive a Canal College award for completing the 14 week programme.

Participants will take part in practical supervised projects in three core areas: natural heritage, built heritage and cultural heritage.

Natural heritage projects will include landscaping, tree planting and vegetation management. They will also include habitat creation projects and wildlife surveys which will help manage biodiversity on the canals.

Built heritage projects will include learning how to undertake surveys of buried locks and listed structures with archaeological surveyors, learning the engineering behind the canal network and practically helping maintain canal structures in partnership with Scottish Canals.

Cultural heritage projects will include training in archiving, guiding skills and researching information to help interpret and engage people with the Scottish canals. Such research will involve oral history stories, poems, photographs and factual text.

Canal College will also target and engage the involvement of the greater community. Young people will be encouraged to share their experience with their family and community through an end of term celebration.

Older volunteers within each community will also be invited to work alongside the young people and their supervisors. In so doing, they will both support youngsters in their community and will share and benefit from the learning and skills training programme provided through the Canal College.