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Supporting the future of the Welsh cultural heritage workforce through paid training

A new cohort of trainees begin their cultural heritage careers across Wales as part of the Cultural Ambition programme

Now in its fourth year, the Cultural Ambition programme is funded by the National Lottery Heritage Fund and the Welsh Government's Museums, Archives and Libraries division. Since 2018, it has provided over 30 young people from Wales with skills and work experience across the Welsh cultural heritage sector through paid training.

This summer, four new trainees will join the Creative & Cultural Skills (CCSkills) Cultural Ambition programme as they take up their work placements at cultural heritage sites across Wales: Glamorgan Archives, St Fagans National Museum of History, National Library Wales, Ceredigion Museum, Plas Mawr/Conwy Castle, Conway Culture Centre, Big Pit National Coal Museum and Tredegar House.

Young people in Wales have been hit particularly hard by Covid-19, with 21% of workers aged 25 and under working in sectors where jobs were most at risk during the pandemic, leading to a 'considerable' rise in 18–24-year-olds claiming unemployment benefits in 2020. The cultural ambition programme, which is open to those aged 18-24 who are non-graduates and not currently in education, employment, or training, is designed to support young people, who may not otherwise be able, to undertake a vocational qualification based on sites through a paid bursary.

The trainees are **Bilal Abdi, 23, from Cardiff** who has previously volunteered at the Pavilion Youth Club and enjoys working with young people to support, inspire and mentor them; **Dafydd Syfydrin, 23 from Ceredigion**, a fluent Welsh speaker who has developed an appreciation of different cultures through his voluntary and paid work in Africa and Austria and his experience of visiting local heritage sites during school trips; **Ottie Foster-Alexander, 18, from Conwy** who is passionate about history and culture, which is evident through their involvement at a medieval re-enactment group of Knights; **Daniel Davies, 18, from Torfaen** who is really interested in learning about history and gaining new skills and has fond memories of a visit to Big Pit as a school child, where he'll be spending one of his training placements.

During the ten-month programme, the trainees will have 2-3 placements at the host cultural heritage sites where they will be mentored by staff members and gain insight into what it takes to run the organisations across the various departments. They will also attend online masterclasses led by professionals from across the sites, giving them an understanding of the types of work and employers that exist beyond their local region.

Alongside their placements, the trainees will be working towards their NVQ Level 2 Cultural Heritage qualification via online sessions with Cardiff and Vale College. The programme also includes employability training which will provide the placements with support around writing CVs and job applications, as well as interview skills.

Previous Cultural Ambition trainees have since gone on to be employed by cultural heritage companies in Wales or have entered further education.

Harri Macguire who was part of the first cohort in 2018 and now works for the National Waterfront Museum said of the opportunity: *'I was in a slump and then I decided to actively take up the traineeship which has led me to where I am now... It's the perfect experience for someone considering a career in culture and heritage.'*

Jane Ide, Chief Executive Officer at CCSkills said: *'We're absolutely thrilled that our Cultural Ambition programme can finally welcome a new cohort of trainees after what has been such a difficult time for both the cultural heritage sector and young people over the last 16 months. Vocational entry-routes into the creative and cultural industries are at the heart of our work at CCSkills and long-term, paid interventions such as this are crucial for young people who may never otherwise access the wonderful plethora of jobs in the thriving cultural heritage sector in Wales'*

Deputy Minister for Arts and Sport at Welsh Government, Dawn Bowden, said: *'The Cultural Ambition programme continues to provide a vital link into Culture in Wales, providing vital skills to trainees and also revitalising venues by drawing in new skills and enthusiasm. Since the start of the programme, I have been impressed by reports of the impact it has had on individuals taking part - for the majority it has been life changing. Going on to higher education, volunteering and finding jobs in culture is truly beneficial for all involved.'*

Andrew White, Director of the National Lottery Heritage Fund in Wales said: *'We're really proud to support the Creative & Cultural Skills Cultural Ambition programme and the vital role it plays in helping young people into work through training, work experience and the opportunity to gain qualifications. After such a challenging time which has impacted young people particularly hard we'd like to wish Bilal, Dafydd, Ottie and Daniel the very best as they take this opportunity to nurture and develop their skills, confidence and experience of being in the workplace.'*

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Notes for Editors

Creative & Cultural Skills works to create a fair and skilled cultural sector by shaping skills, education and employment best practice. We provoke action and enable learning opportunities that drive change and help to build an inclusive skilled sector by: informing and helping the sector respond to changes in the technical education system; helping employers see the benefits of an inclusive workforce; improving understanding and awareness of the career options across the cultural sector, in turn feeding new talent into the workforce and supporting the sector to continue on a course of economic growth and meet diversity ambitions.

For further information, images, and interviews, please contact the Creative & Cultural Skills Press Office: T: 020 7015 1800| info@ccskills.org.uk

