



Heritage Skills helps Conor scale to international heights

CITB NI secured over £480,100 of funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) through its 'Skills for the Future' programme to deliver the 'Sustaining Traditional Building Skills in NI' project.



'The Sustaining Traditional Building Skills in NI' project has provided opportunities for 18 general and specialist craftspeople to work with 10 experienced heritage contractors to develop their knowledge, skills and expertise of traditional building skills through work-based placements of 12 months duration and gain a NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Heritage Skills Construction in their occupational area.

Bursaries were awarded in the 8 occupational areas including, thatching, stonemasonry, conservation metalwork and blacksmithing.

Conor Scullion, an NVQ Level 3 qualified Bricklayer from Lurgan, Co Armagh was awarded the bursary in Stonemasonry with the Northern Ireland Environment Agency. Conor was based in Derry/Londonderry working on the City's Walls, one of the city's main tourist attractions. Everyday Conor travelled from Lurgan to Derry/Londonderry, a 140 mile round trip to undertake his placement which showed his tremendous commitment to the bursary placement at his own expense and on 'A' class roads.

Conor obtained an NVQ Level 3 Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction) - Mason but due to the downturn in the construction industry in Northern Ireland, on completion of his placement, and after many attempts to get work, Conor left Northern Ireland in April 2013 and went to Christchurch in search of work. Christchurch is the largest city in the South Island of New Zealand which had been devastated by a number of earthquakes in 2010 and 2011.

After 3 months of doing bricklaying and always knowing where his passion lay, an opportunity opened at the Arts Centre, Christchurch who were recruiting heritage specialists to complete the biggest restoration and conservation project ongoing in the world today with an overall cost of £300 million for completion in 2020.

Conor said, "It is a great opportunity to put my heritage skills to good use on such a high profile site. It is also a pleasure to be working alongside such talented craftsmen and everyone is so helpful inside and outside of work."

Conor has now set up a small business based in Christchurch, specialising in all aspects of brick, block and stone structures from modern day to heritage buildings.