

North East case study for Heritage Counts 2015

Region:	North East
Theme demonstrated by case study:	Voluntary support to enable young people's engagement in heritage
Name of project/group:	Northumberland National Park Authority
Lead contact:	Kate Sheehan-Finn, Young Archaeologists Club Volunteer Branch Leader
Location:	Northumberland National Park

Short description of project:

The North Pennines and Northumberland Uplands Young Archaeologists Club (YAC) was established through a partnership between the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) Partnership and Northumberland National Park Authority.

The club is for children aged 8-16 years and aims to create fun ways of learning about the past to promote a greater understanding of archaeology and to develop a greater awareness of the local heritage found in these two protected landscapes. The North Pennines and Northumberland Uplands YAC provides opportunities for children in rural communities, who wouldn't otherwise have opportunities to engage with archaeology and heritage.

The YAC provides roving sessions across the North Pennines and mid-Northumberland and draws members from Penrith, Hexham, Gateshead, Bedlington, Harbottle and Otterburn. The club is run by volunteers provides a minimum of 6 sessions a year on the 3rd Saturday of each month with on average 16 children per session.



Young Archaeologists © Northumberland National Park Authority

Why did you get involved with this project or activity?

I joined the YAC as a Volunteer Branch Leader. Joining the YAC as a Volunteer Leader is a great opportunity to do fun archaeological activities which educate children in an informal and enjoyable way for all involved.

How did you resource your project or activity?

The first 18 months of the YAC was funded through the Altogether Archaeology project, which enabled locally based heritage practitioners to support individual sessions. The overall planning and delivery of the programme was, however, carried out by the community archaeologist.

What would have happened without your project or activity?

This particular YAC was specifically established to provide opportunities for children and families in rural areas across Northumberland National Park and North Pennines AONB. Whilst the long term benefits of this YAC are still unclear, there have clearly been significantly more opportunities for children to engage with archaeology across this geographic area which would not otherwise have happened.

What difference been made by your project or activity?

Feedback from individual sessions has been extremely positive (both from parents and children). The YAC has worked with local archaeologists, other YACs and local tourist attractions and providers, thus making a difference to a wide range of organisations. Through careful session planning and rigorous adherence to child protection policy and best practice, each child has an enjoyable, informative and safe learning experience.

What have you learnt from this experience?

I would strongly encourage anyone considering setting up a Young Archaeologists Club and there is a wealth of constructive advice about how to go about this on the Council for British Archaeology's website. It is helpful to have a good number and mix of volunteers to support the club as well as finance in place to resource the club's activities.

What does the future hold for your project or activity?

The YAC relies upon the capacity of volunteers. However, it is hoped that the construction of the National Landscape Discovery Centre at Once Brewed on Hadrian's Wall, will provide a significant opportunity for the continuation of the YAC to continue its work engaging children and families from rural communities.

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