

# All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme 2026-27

PROGRAMME INFORMATION



# ALL-IRELAND HERITAGE SKILLS PROGRAMME

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme supports those working in the construction sector in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland to push their skills to the next level and continue on their journey to becoming the next generation of experts in their chosen craft.

## INTRODUCTION

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme partners believe that it is crucial to preserve the wisdom and knowledge that embodies many of the traditional building skills which have shaped our historical built environment. As many workers in the sector now reach retirement age it is vital that these skills are passed on to the next generation of experts in their chosen craft. In doing so, we strive to ensure that the knowledge and practical craft skills required to restore and conserve our historical buildings remains alive, as well as demonstrating the significant role that traditional craft skills can play in creating new spaces and places.

Each year the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme brings together a cohort of up to 8 students for a period of twelve months to gain practical experience in traditional building skills, conservation and repair, interdisciplinary practice, and the opportunity to work towards an Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills (Construction).

These students represent a diverse and skilled cohort of individual craftspeople who demonstrate a passion for their particular trade. Many of our candidates have followed pathways through college programmes, or have acquired significant practical experience working within the sector.

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme aims to galvanise this experience, providing participants the opportunity to work alongside like-minded individuals, expand their portfolio of skills, and build networks across Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.



## PROGRAMME AIMS

- ◆ To upskill a cohort of craftspeople in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland, providing specialist knowledge, interdisciplinary skills and on-the-job training.
- ◆ To develop a showcase project that will build enthusiasm for heritage craft training in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.
- ◆ To create a network of practitioners, organisations and individuals, across borders, who can work towards the development of future programmes and initiatives within the heritage crafts sector.

# PROGRAMME STRUCTURE

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is a 12-month course which supports those working in the construction sector to push their skills to the next level and continue on their journey to becoming the next generation of traditional experts in their chosen craft.



## SUMMER SCHOOL

3 WEEKS

The course starts with an intensive three-week Summer School, delivered on the Dumfries House estate in Scotland.

The Summer School is an opportunity to gain insight into the broader teachings of The King's Foundation and includes activities such as drawing classes, geometry and lectures as well as architectural tours.

During the second week, participants take part in a series of hands-on craft workshops with master craftspeople, gaining an appreciation for the many different skills and materials which make up our built environment.

The Summer School concludes with a 'Design and Build' workshop based around traditional principles of design and construction.



## INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS

35 WEEKS

A key aspect of the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme involves participation in up to thirty-five weeks of Industry Placements with craftspeople and traditional construction companies in both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

Placements are tailored towards the specific trade area of each participant and provide an excellent opportunity to build practical skills, and gather vital evidence for those working towards gaining the Level 3 NVQ Diploma in Heritage Skills.

Participants typically take part in two or three placements with different organisations. Placements are arranged on behalf of participants by the programme coordinator, drawing on our extensive network of placement providers.



## WINTER SCHOOL MATERIALS WEEKS BUSINESS COURSE

7 WEEKS

### WINTER SCHOOL

In January, following the completion of the first industry placement, participants attend a residential Winter School, hosted either in Kilkenny or in Moira, Co. Down.

Over the duration of two weeks, participants engage with talks and workshops on different aspects of the wider built environment, heritage and sustainability.

### MATERIALS WEEKS

The programme is interspersed with five week-long residential courses that focus on materials in different regions of both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland. These weeks will explore the themes of stone, wood, lime, thatch and earth.

### BUSINESS COURSE

Participants are also introduced to a range of heritage professionals and business experts throughout the programme who give advice about how to work as a heritage professional within the current business environment.



## COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

2 WEEKS

The Collaborative Project is an opportunity for participants to work collaboratively on a project related to heritage skills in Ireland.

During the early stages of the programme, participants are introduced to the scope of the project by the programme coordinator. Work and engagement on the project continues when the group reconvenes at various stages throughout the programme.

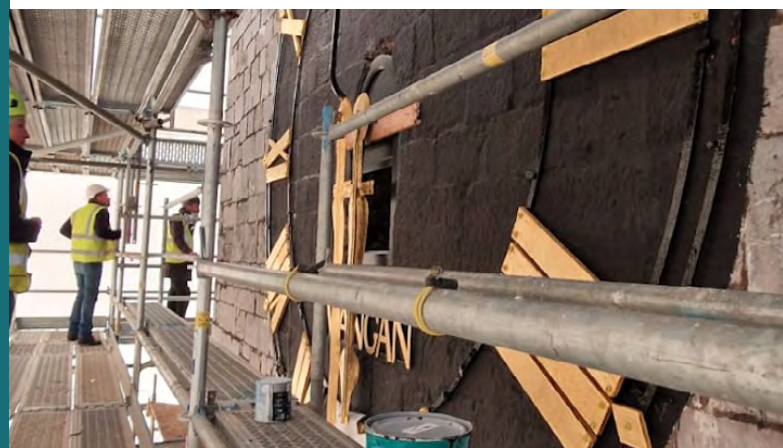
Having completed the Industry Placements, the group come together for a final time to complete the collaborative project as a team.

The Collaborative Project is an opportunity to demonstrate many of the skills acquired during the industry placements, and also to learn from the variety of other trade areas represented in the group.

# PROGRAMME DATES 2026-27

[Subject to change]

<b>Start</b>	<b>Sunday 12th July 2026</b>
<b>Summer School</b> (3 weeks)	<b>12th July - 1st August</b> <b>Dumfries House Estate, Scotland</b>
<b>Break 1</b>	<b>3rd August - 7th August</b>
<b>NVQ Induction</b> (2 weeks)	<b>10th August - 21st August</b>
<b>Placement 1</b> (15 weeks)	<b>24th August - 18th December</b>
<b>Materials' Week 1</b>	<b>28th September - 2nd October</b>
<b>Materials' Week 2</b>	<b>9th November - 13th November</b>
<b>Break 2</b>	<b>21st December 2026 - 1st January 2027</b>
<b>Winter School &amp; Business Course</b> (2 weeks)	<b>4th January - 15th January</b>
<b>Placement 2</b> (10 weeks)	<b>18th January - 2nd April</b>
<b>Materials' Week 3</b>	<b>15th - 19th February</b>
<b>Break 3</b>	<b>5th April - 9th April</b>
<b>Materials' Week 4</b>	<b>12th April - 16th April</b>
<b>Placement 3</b> (8 weeks)	<b>19th April - 18th June</b>
<b>Materials' Week 5</b>	<b>10th May - 14th May</b>
<b>Collaborative Project</b> (2 weeks)	<b>21st June - 2nd July</b>
<b>End</b>	<b>2nd July 2027</b>



## ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

---

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is geared towards those working across both Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland with experience in craft areas such as: stonemasonry, carpentry and joinery, bricklaying, blacksmithing, plastering, thatching, roofing and tiling, painting and decorating.

In addition to practical experience in a building craft discipline, applicants should have an interest in developing their craft with a focus towards heritage and traditional methods whilst striking a balance with 21st Century ways of working.

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme aims to highlight the holistic nature of our built environment and as such promotes multidisciplinary learning, providing exposure to elements of architecture, design and a range of craft skills. Each year the programme hosts up to a maximum of 8 participants. Participants are selected via a process of application, shortlisting, and interview.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate at least **ONE** of the following:

- **QQI/NFQ Level 4 or 5 or equivalent in a building craft/construction subject.**
- **NVQ/SVQ Level 2 or 3 or equivalent in a building craft/construction subject.**
- **Qualification in a building craft/construction subject from a recognised authority.**
- **Significant working experience in your chosen craft/ trade area.**

Please note, you will required to submit a digital portfolio containing examples of work/projects you have undertaken in relation to your craft/trade area.

## INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS

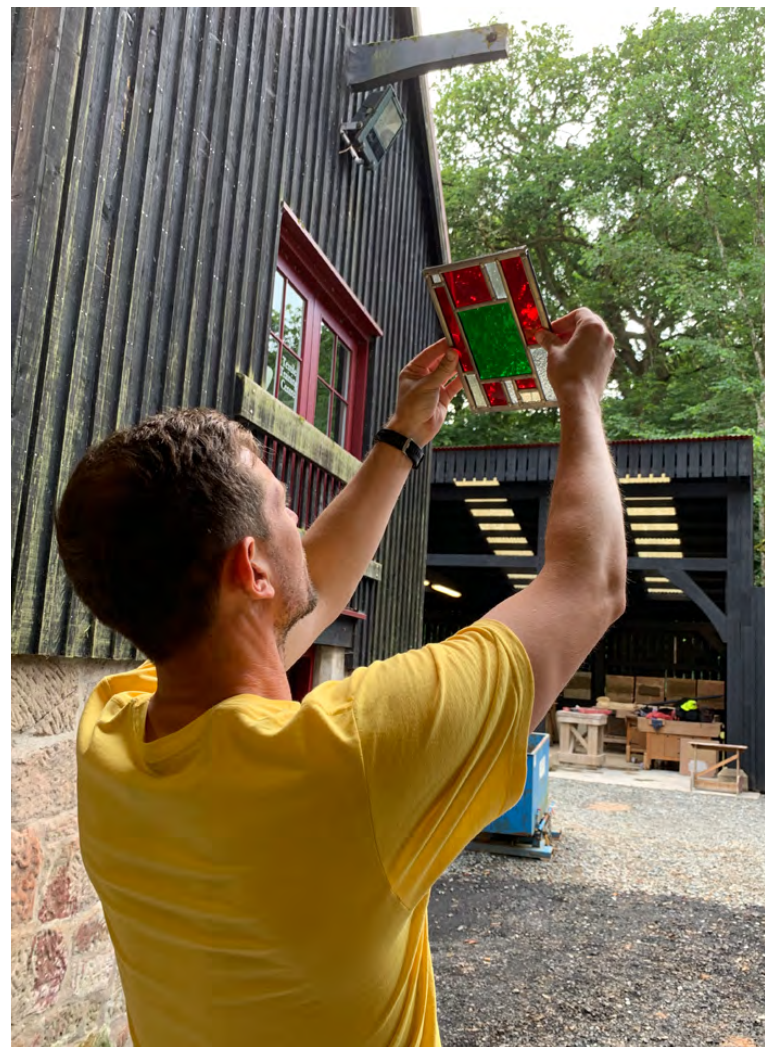
---

In most cases you will be required to hold **ONE** of the following in order to be eligible for the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme:

- **UK or IRELAND Passport Holder**
- **Normally resident in the Republic of Ireland**
- **Normally resident in Northern Ireland**
- **Settled Status / Indefinite Leave to Remain in the UK**
- **Pre-settled Status**

Acceptance onto the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme alone is not sufficient to obtain the appropriate residency / study visa. Please note that the programme partners cannot assist you in obtaining a visa.

If you require a visa to work or study in the Republic of Ireland or Northern Ireland, please contact the Programme Coordinator prior to submitting an application.



## ATTENDANCE

---

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is a full-time course, commencing on 12th July 2026 and concluding on 2nd July 2027.

Breaks are scheduled throughout as per the course timetable. Please note that no holiday leave can be taken outside of this period.

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is generally delivered Monday – Friday of each week, however, you will be required to attend additional hours during particular aspects of the course such as the Summer School. Individual placement providers will advise on your hours of attendance during your Industry Placements.

## FUNDING & BURSARIES

---

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme is made possible due to the generosity of a wide range of individuals and organisations who support the programme each year.

All participants of the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme 2026-27 will be awarded a full scholarship covering the course fees, as well as being provided with a monthly tax-free bursary of £1400 / €1600 to help towards living costs.

Participants are required to arrange and pay for all accommodation, travel, subsistence and any associated living costs while on placement. The majority of materials needed for the course will be provided.

## ACCOMMODATION

---

During the Summer School, Winter School, and Material Weeks accommodation will be provided.

During Industry Placements you will be required to source and pay for your own short term accommodation which will enable you to fully participate in the programme as arranged by the programme coordinator.

Due to the nature of the construction sector, it may not always be possible to provide participants with exact placement locations/ details well in advance. Therefore, on some occasions you may be required to find accommodation at short notice. Every effort will be made to ensure placements are confirmed as soon as possible.

“ THE MATERIALS WEEKS  
HAVE PROVIDED US  
ALL WITH A BETTER  
UNDERSTANDING OF  
DIFFERENT MATERIALS.  
IT'S BEEN A PRIVILEGE  
TO TAKE PART IN  
WORKSHOPS THAT  
I MAY NEVER HAVE  
HAD THE CHANCE TO  
OTHERWISE. ”



## INDUSTRY PLACEMENTS

---

A key aspect of the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme will involve participation in up to 35 weeks of Industry Placements with craftspeople and traditional construction companies around the island of Ireland.

Industry Placements are arranged by the programme coordinator, drawing on our extensive network across the sector. There are a number of factors which need to be considered when arranging and confirming placements. Examples of some considerations include:

- Placement providers workload.
- Placement providers insurance provision.
- Placement providers capacity to monitor a student.
- Location of placement provider and projects.
- Duration of placement.
- Relevance of work in-line with NVQ requirements
- Relevance of work in-line with the ethos of the programme.
- Relevance of the work in line with funding requirements.
- Your prior experience.



## NVQ DIPLOMA IN HERITAGE SKILLS

---

The All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme aims to build capacity within the traditional building skills sector. One way of supporting this is through providing participants with the opportunity to work towards a Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills (Construction). Those successful in gaining a place on the programme will be required to undertake this qualification wherever possible.

The Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills (Construction) is an on site assessed qualification (i.e. evidence is gathered through participation in live projects, not simulated work). Obtaining evidence in traditional conservation, restoration and repair methods will be a priority for those undertaking this qualification.

A participant's eligibility for pursuing the NVQ qualification will be reviewed by an appropriate NVQ Assessor at the start of the programme. Where a participant is deemed eligible, it is expected that they will undertake the NVQ qualification.

Those undertaking the NVQ will meet with their assigned assessor throughout the year and have regular telephone conversations and email correspondence. It is the participant's responsibility to ensure that they collect all of the relevant information and evidence as requested by the assigned assessor, ensuring any evidence is submitted on time.

The Level 3 NVQ in Heritage Skills is trade specific, i.e. Stone, Wood Occupations, Solid Plastering. Due to time constraints of the programme, and/or limited availability of NVQ Assessors it may not be possible to make the qualification available in all trade areas.

## REPORTING & EVALUATION

---

As part of a participants attendance on the programme, feedback and evaluation will be required at various points in the course. These reports should reflect the tasks that have been performed and the knowledge acquired.

Reporting and evaluation is a vital part of our agreement with many of the programme sponsors and funders. Each evaluation will be accessible online, and should be completed within the time requirements as set by the programme coordinator' this is typically within one week.

A number of our sponsors and funders may nominate specific students on the programme that they would like to follow more closely during their time on the course.

We will inform participants if this is the case and may look to introduce participants to a key contact within the organisation. As part of this nomination participants may be required to provide additional information, complete additional feedback forms, attend specific events, or be featured in specific publicity material.

## TOOLS & EQUIPMENT

---

Should you be successful in gaining a place on the programme you must ensure that you have access to appropriate workwear, including waterproofs, winter clothing and steel toecap boots.

During the Industry Placements participants will generally be required to bring their own set of 'core hand tools' i.e. any hand tools that you would use on a regular basis as per your trade.

PPE such as hard hats, goggles, gloves, hi-viz vests and masks will be provided.

The programme partners will not make any reimbursements for damage, loss, and/or wear and tear of your own tools and equipment.



# PARTNERS

---

## **THE KING'S FOUNDATION**

The King's Foundation supports people to create community through championing a sustainable approach to how we live our lives and build our homes. By teaching traditional arts and skills and restoring historic sites, The King's Foundation is leading the way forward. The King's Foundation work in the UK and internationally but at the heart of the organisation is the heritage-led regeneration of the Dumfries House estate in Scotland and its wider community, where its principles and philosophies are explored and put into practice. The work of The King's Foundation is inspired by its President, HM The King, and his philosophy of harmony: that by understanding the balance, the order and the relationships between ourselves and the natural world, one can create a more sustainable future.

## **THE HERITAGE COUNCIL**

Established under The Heritage Act 1995, the Heritage Council is a public body based in the Republic of Ireland whose mission is to develop a wide understanding of the vital contribution that our heritage makes to our social, environmental and economic well-being. The Heritage Council has a particular responsibility to promote interest, education, knowledge and pride in national heritage. The Heritage Council also provides policy advice for government on heritage including issues impacting the built, natural and cultural heritage.

## **HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT DIVISION DEPARTMENT FOR COMMUNITIES**

Department for Communities is the largest of Northern Ireland's nine government departments. Within the Department, Historic Environment Division records, protects, conserves, enhances and promotes the historic environment to secure its benefits for current and future generations. It passionately believes that the historic environment is of value to us all and that we should all be able to enjoy it and participate in sustaining it. It believes that protecting and investing in our historic environment is essential to creating a better future, because it supports our prosperity, strengthens our society, and shapes our character. These beliefs have shaped its aim: 'Helping communities to enjoy and realise the value of our historic environment'.

## **THE CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY TRAINING BOARD NORTHERN IRELAND**

CITB NI is the Industry Training Board for construction, the role of which is to encourage the adequate training of those employed or intending to be employed in the construction industry and to improve the skills and productivity of the industry. CITB NI is also a founding member of the Northern Ireland Traditional Skills Working Group, which works with other stakeholders to implement initiatives to further traditional skills training in NI.

## **NATIONAL MUSEUMS NORTHERN IRELAND**

National Museums NI preserves, protects and promotes Northern Ireland's cultural assets, knowledge and collective memory. As a public institution, NMNI is passionate about its museums and collections playing an important and valuable role at the heart of society. It works in partnership with the public to share stories and care for and present a vast range of objects bringing important cultural, educational, social and scientific ideas to life. It employs skilled staff in a variety of traditional skills roles to care for its collections and share these skills with the public.



2024/25 students' graduation

## APPLY NOW

Applications for the All-Ireland Heritage Skills Programme 2026-27 are now open.

To apply please visit the National Museums NI's website [HERE](#)

For your application to be considered please ensure you complete the online application form, with reference and upload the accompanying portfolio in the correct format.

If you have any queries about the programme or your application please contact: [tbyrne@heritagecouncil.ie](mailto:tbyrne@heritagecouncil.ie)

Deadline for receipt of applications is **Friday 10th April 2026 by 4pm**.

Please note that applications received after this time will not be considered.

Interviews will take place online in early May 2026.



THE KING'S  
FOUNDATION



**DfC**  
Department  
for Communities  
[www.communities-ni.gov.uk](http://www.communities-ni.gov.uk)



**NNNI**  
NATIONAL  
MUSEUMS NI