Durham in Time

Evaluation Report

Contents

Executive Summary

"I think it is an excellent project for including 'everyday' people in recording their lives for future generations."[1]

This document has been produced by freelance consultant Susan Priestley to present an independent evaluation of 'Durham in Time', a project developed and led by the Libraries, Learning and Culture section of Durham County Council's Adult, Health and Wellbeing Department. The project, which took place between October 2007 and May 2011, was designed to respond to *"an identified need of provision for a community based strategy that will enhance, record and preserve the rich and diverse culture and heritage of County Durham "[2].*   *The project* was funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Durham in Time involved and engaged over 100 volunteers in a programme of local history and heritage which used as its basis both accredited and non-accredited training across two interlinked areas:

- community heritage groups and societies were facilitated by Durham County Council project staff to **archive and record** objects and images from their collections onto online searchable databases which were subsequently included within a unique community group website.
- individuals were able to access **learning** opportunities in ICT and heritage-related training programmes, including word-processing, Desk Top Publishing, PowerPoint, genealogy and family history, archiving and record keeping.

This two-pronged approach meant that volunteers could access training whilst being professionally guided and supported to actively archive, record and build websites to make their collections accessible to a world-wide audience.

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[1] Female participant (aged 46-55) in the Durham in Time project.
[2] Taken from the original application to HLF in 2007.

Research and consultation for this report indicates that Durham in Time has resulted in a number of successes and achievements and has met the aims set out at the start of the project:

It has **supported community groups in recording/archiving their local history collections through the use of modern technology** by designing and delivering training to equip groups with the knowledge and skills to conserve, archive and promote their community collections.

It has **encouraged widening participation and accessibility to learning programmes designed to develop skills in ICT and local history** through the design and delivery of over 90 accredited and 100 unaccredited training courses to over 100 volunteers in local venues across County Durham. Moreover, there is very clear evidence that expectations have been exceeded not only in terms the quantity of courses, but also the quality of content and delivery. The External Verifier for the Open College Network stated within the Quality Review Report for the accredited courses:

"Completed assessment tasks from the ICT Family History programme, although registered at Level 1, had many of the qualities of evaluation and analysis normally associated with Level 3."

It has **supported inter-generational activities through family learning** by way of local history and heritage-led activities which have encouraged and facilitated interaction and the sharing of knowledge and life experiences across generations.

It has **enhanced social and community spirit, developing networks within/without communities** by bringing together like-minded groups and individuals within friendly, informal and accessible settings which have encouraged discussion, debate and the sharing of knowledge and ideas.

Finally, the new skills and knowledge gained over the course of the project have resulted in the **production of CD ROMs, websites, a database of archived collections and booklets of local community features, i.e. history walks, etc.** The project's primary achievement is that it has more than met its target of developing 30 websites[3] with and for 30 local community history and heritage groups across County Durham (the number of websites developed to date stands at 32), making around 3000 digital images available to a global audience.

As well as the very impressive outputs and outcomes outlined above, the project has left a very valuable legacy in terms of the network of voluntary groups established by Durham in Time. With further support and an effective management plan, there is every reason to believe that the project could develop and grow to significantly contribute to the community history and heritage infrastructure of County Durham.

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[3] At the time of writing this report 27 sites were 'live' and three in the final stages of development.

SECTION 1: The Durham in Time project

1.1 Background and context

"Durham in Time will… deliver a community based heritage project that will enhance, record and preserve the rich and diverse culture and heritage of County Durham."[4]

'Durham in Time' (DiT) commenced in October 2007 and built upon a significant body of past local history and heritage projects and initiatives undertaken by Durham County Council, including the Durham Miner Project, the Coal Mining Oral History Project and the Community Heritage Project. The original funding bid to HLF stated that: *"Focus will be given to digitally recording the vast records and historical collections held by community groups across County Durham"*. The project aims were:

- To support community groups in recording/archiving their local history collections through the use of modern technology.
- To encourage widening participation and accessibility to learning programmes designed to develop skills in ICT and local history.
- To support inter-generational activities through family learning.
- To enhance social and community spirit, developing networks within/without communities.
- To produce CD ROMs/website/database of archived collections.
- To produce booklets of local community features, i.e. history walks, etc.

The Durham in Time project consisted of an interlinked programme of professional support and learning opportunities. A learning programme offered both accredited and non-accredited training opportunities to individuals and voluntary community history and heritage groups in new technologies and heritage-based subjects. Volunteers were able to learn new skills across a range of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) areas, including Database, Desk Top Publishing and Digital Imaging, as well as local history, collections, archiving and research. At the same time, the archiving and recording element of the project enabled volunteers to work alongside a professional to digitally record the collections held by community groups across County Durham. This combined programme has equipped volunteers with the skills and knowledge needed to effectively

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[4] Project outline, Durham County Council.

care for community collections and make them more accessible through the central 'Durham in Time' community website hosted by Durham County Council.

1.2   Project outputs and outcomes

'Durham in Time' has over achieved on many of its initial targets and has delivered a number of significant outcomes and outputs:

- The project's primary target was to work with 30 local community history and/or heritage societies to build websites to link into a county based (and ultimately a national) website to increase accessibility and widen participation in relation to community collections. In fact, 32 websites are now 'live', which has resulted in around 3000 digital images being accessible to a world-wide audience.

- In addition, 15 community groups are working towards customised searchable databases, which are stand-alone searchable cataloguing systems within which groups can record digital images and associated information. Ultimately, all of the groups' images will be added to one online searchable database and all of the combined sites' archive images will be accessible through this one point of entry. Crucially, as individual groups have been trained to update their own websites, they can continue to use them in relation to their own collections beyond the lifespan of the project.

- The project has also more than met its targets in terms of training and has designed and delivered over 90 accredited and over 100 unaccredited training courses. Moreover, the standard of the training has also been a significant over-achievement. The Quality Review Report carried out by the National Open College Network in relation to accredited training found that:

  "Completed assessment tasks from the ICT Family History programme, although registered at Level 1, had many of the qualities of evaluation and analysis normally associated with Level 3."

- The social benefits of the project have been wide ranging and have impacted on far more than the establishment of new friendships. There is clear evidence that the informal and sociable approach to delivering training was a major incentive to a number of volunteers who may not have accessed learning under other, more formal circumstances.

- Perhaps most important in relation to sustainability, however, is the establishment of a network of voluntary community history and heritage groups and societies which has resulted from the Durham in

Time project. This has the potential, over time, to significantly strengthen and add to the local community history and heritage infrastructure.

1.3   The evaluation process

The aim of the evaluation process has been to measure and present the impact of the project on community history and heritage in terms of outcomes, achievements,

The evaluation report:

- assesses the project in relation to the engagement and involvement of individuals as volunteers in the project;
- measures the impact of the project on local community history and heritage groups ;
- measures the project against the original aims and objectives;
- identifies and presents the outcomes and impacts of the project;
- identifies ways in which future activity might build upon the project's achievements to further strengthen the local community history and heritage sector.
- assesses the project's legacy and long-term sustainability;

The report is set out in five sections:

Section 1 presents an overview of the Durham in Time project.
Section 2 outlines the findings from consultation with participants and Durham County Council staff involved in the design, development and delivery of the project.
Section 3 summarises the impacts and issues arising from the consultation.
Section 4 highlights the ways in which the project has met its original aims and objectives.
Section 5 draws together the conclusions resulting from the previous sections and makes a number of recommendations in relation to how the lessons learned might inform the future of the project and its long-term sustainability.

SECTION 2: Consultation feedback

"As a group Durham in Time has helped to organise us and make the collection more accessible. It has shown us how and where to look for information and it has been lot of fun!"

Information for this report has been drawn from a number of sources, including:

- consultation with past and present Durham County Council staff who have worked on the project;
- information gathered through an in-depth questionnaire circulated to 100 project volunteers (40 were completed and returned);
- telephone consultation with a sample of project volunteers;
- responses from 79 volunteers' Learning Journals, which collected information relating to:
    - what learners hoped to gain from the course;
    - new knowledge and skills gained;
    - a review of the course in terms of enjoyment, achievement and future progression; and
    - other available information and reports relating to the project.

2.1   Feedback from volunteers

2.2.1 The learning journals
Each learning participant was provided with a learning journal which he/she was asked to complete at various stages throughout the course. The purpose of the journals was two-fold:

- to provide an opportunity for learners to record and monitor their own personal learning journeys and accomplishments; and
- to provide valuable feedback and information to inform future training and wider Durham County Council working processes and practice.

Analysis of the information provided within the learning journals presents the following findings:

- A total of 79 learning journals were completed for courses covering Spreadsheets, Desk Top Publishing, Powerpoint and Genealogy and Family History.
- When asked what they would like to gain from the course they undertook: 66 volunteers said *"To increase my knowledge"*; 38 said *"to build personal goals"*; 25 people said *"To gain confidence and believe in myself"*; and 20 people said *"To feel better about myself"* (respondents could choose more than one option).

In addition to monitoring progress throughout the programme, volunteers were asked to reflect on their achievements and intentions at the end of the project. A sample of learner responses to three questions relating to enjoyment, achievements and progression are given below:

Reflections - What have you enjoyed, not enjoyed and learned from the project?

"I learned a huge amount and enjoyed it all enormously…"
"I enjoyed the course very much. I had no knowledge of Powerpoint and now feel confident in its use."
"Working at my own speed with one-to-one assistance from tutor. I have learnt a useful skill additional to my previous knowledge"
"Enjoyed: learning new ways of using computer; meeting like-minded people; challenge of completion. Didn't enjoy: repeated activities which took a long time for no purpose; having to go back to do page drops tec. – evidence could be gathered as go along. Learned: Powerpoint uses, flash drives, effects."

Personal gains: Are there other things you have gained from the course? e.g. confidence, new skills, new friends?

"I now have more confidence that I could give a Powerpoint presentation. The other students and tutor were very friendly – a relaxed atmosphere and good learning environment."
"I have certainly learned new skills and will feel more confident about using the computer in the future."
"New friends. Interested to proceed further with research."
"I feel more confident about where to look for information…"
"Those who were acquaintances are now my friends."

What would you like to do next?

"I intend to put into practice what I have been learning."
"Complete a more detailed family history."
"I would like to continue research into my family tree but I would also like to find out more about social history."
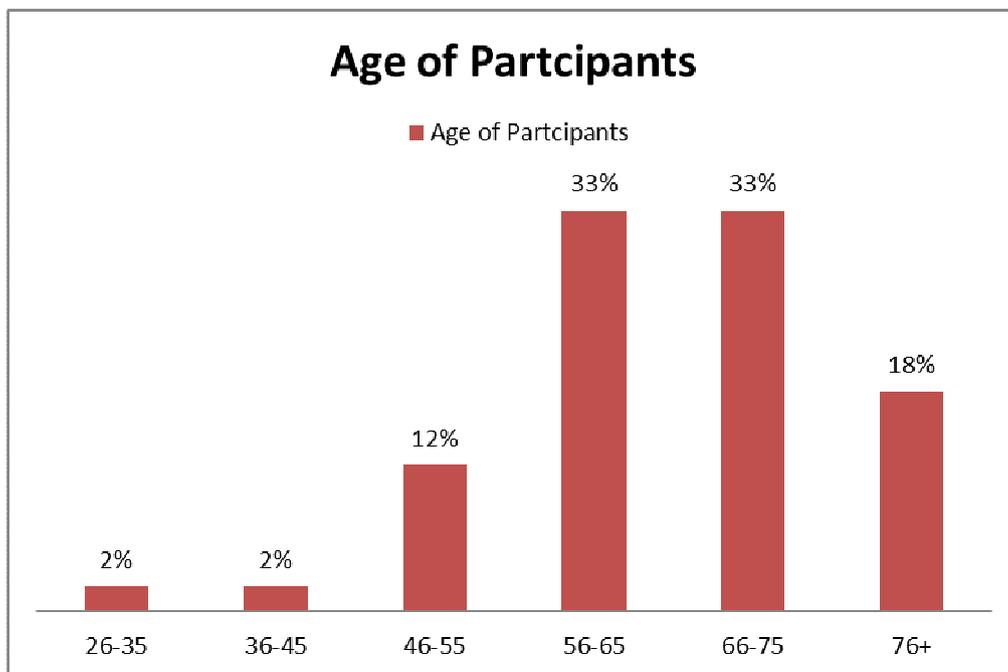
2.2.2 Feedback from volunteer questionnaires

Around 100 questionnaires were sent to individuals who had engaged with Durham in Time. 40 questionnaires were completed and returned. The main findings arising from the questionnaires is summarised below:

Gender
The majority of respondents (27 people/around 68%) were female and 13 (around 32%) were male.

Age
Most respondents were in either the 55-65 or 66-75 year age groups (13 people/around 31% in each group). Seven people (around 18%) were aged 76 years or older.

Age of Partcipants

■ Age of Partcipants

Age group	Percentage
26-35	2%
36-45	2%
46-55	12%
56-65	33%
66-75	33%
76+	18%

Disability
7 of the 40 questionnaire respondents (around 18%) considered themselves to have a disability or life limiting illness.

Reason for participating in Durham in Time
The chart below shows people's responses when asked to choose from four possible reasons for becoming involved in Durham in Time (people were able to choose more than one option). The chart illustrates that main driver was to increase knowledge and/or skills, but that meeting new people and taking a

more active part in their local history and heritage community were also important to participants.

No of responses

Category	No of responses
To learn new things and/or develop new skills	25
To further my interest in local history or heritage	26
To play a more active role in my history/heritage group	12
To met new like-minded people	10
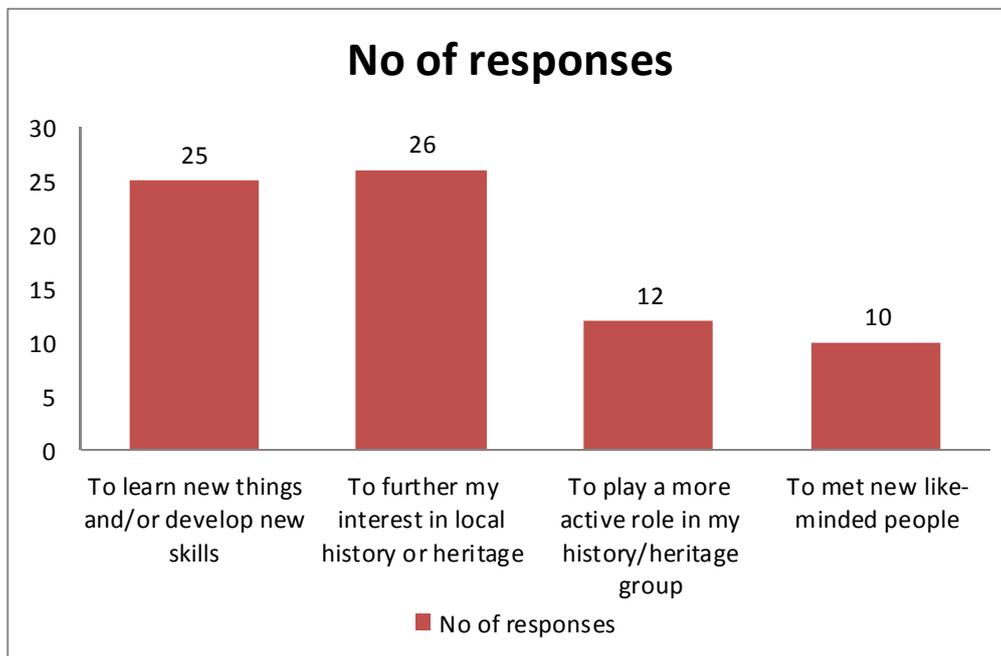
Achievement

33 people (around 82%) said that they had achieved what they set out to do during their involvement in Durham in Time. Five people (around 12%) said they had not achieved what they had set out to do (two people did not answer the question).

When asked to consider more specific statements about what benefits and achievements volunteers had gained from Durham in Time, the responses were:

85% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *"I have found the Durham in Time project an enjoyable experience"*.
70% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *"I have made new friends and have expanded my social circle as a result of my involvement in Durham in Time"*.
68% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *"My confidence has increased as a result of my involvement in Durham in Time"*.
80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *"I have gained a real sense of achievement as a result of my involvement in Durham in Time"*.
80% of respondents strongly agreed or agreed that *"I feel inspired to use the new knowledge I have gained in the future"*.

Continuation

30 out of the 40 people who responded (75%) said that they would like to carry on their involvement with Durham in Time if the project continues.

2.2.3 Feedback from training course evaluations

Evaluation forms were completed by a total of 77 volunteers who completed training courses in: Genealogy and Family History; Desk Top Publishing; PowerPoint; and Spreadsheets. Although the information scoring system changed part-way through the project (please see a summary of the feedback below) it is clear that volunteers scored the vast majority of the elements as either 'good' or 'outstanding'.

TRAINING EVALUATION FEEDBACK – 45 forms			
	Poor (no of volunteers)	Satisfactory (no of volunteers)	Good (no of volunteers)
Induction	0	3	43
Planning your learning	0	7	42
Your progress	0	7	38
Quality of teaching	0	2	45
Learning materials	0	11	35
Time for you to discuss/ask questions	0	1	46
Advice for continuing with studies	0	2	42
IT facilities	2	10	32
Safety and cleanliness	0	4	42
Domestic arrangements	0	6	41

TRAINING EVALUATION FEEDBACK – 32 forms				
	Poor (no of volunteers)	Satisfactory (no of volunteers)	Good (no of volunteers)	Outstanding (no of volunteers)
Induction	0	1	15	13
Planning your learning	0	3	15	13
Your progress	1	3	19	5
Quality of teaching	1	0	8	21
Learning materials	1	3	11	16
Time for you to discuss/ask questions	0	3	15	13
Advice for continuing with studies	0	3	14	12
IT facilities	1	4	15	11
Safety and cleanliness	0	2	14	15
Domestic arrangements	1	0	10	20

2.2 Feedback from Durham in Time project staff

"The fact that Durham in Time has built on previous community heritage projects delivered with, rather than for, local history groups has illustrated that support for heritage in County Durham is very much ongoing."
Julie Hawthorne, former Development Worker.

A number of Durham County Council staff have worked on the Durham in Time project over the course of its three and a half year lifetime. The staff timeline for the early part of the project can be tracked as follows:

October 2007: Project commences with the employment of a Web Developer to build the Durham in Time website and a database to hold an archive of photographs. The project was overseen by a Project Co-ordinator (2.5 days per week).
May 2008: A Development Worker (Training) was appointed to design and deliver 90 accredited courses in ICT and heritage subjects and to engage 30 heritage groups to develop their own websites.
December 2008: A Development Worker (Heritage) was appointed to design and deliver 90 non-accredited courses in cataloguing, archiving and scanning. This post also played a pivotal role in engaging the 30 heritage groups to develop their websites.
April 2009: The Web Developer left when his contract comes to an end.
April 2010: The Development Worker (Heritage) left to take up a new post and the project was re-evaluated and a time extension to May 2011 applied for – and granted by the Heritage Lottery Fund. The remainder of the project was delivered by:

A Development Worker (Training and Heritage) who has delivered a programme of accredited ICT and Heritage courses and continued to engage groups in the creation of websites.
A Project Worker (Website and Database) who has worked on the Durham in Time website, as well as delivering non-accredited training to assist community heritage groups to develop and manage their own searchable archive resources.

Feedback for this report has been accessed from the above two members of current staff, as well as two previous members of staff who have now left Durham County Council. Feedback can be summarised as follows:

- Despite early problems which significantly slowed the project's initial progress, specifically around the initial web development, the overall staff team feedback has been very positive. It was felt that the need to review and extend the project in the spring of 2010 ultimately led to a stronger and more effective programme of work.

- The project has built up some very strong relationships with and between community history groups and the social benefits have been one of the project's major strengths. Although establishing the network has been by far the most challenging and time-consuming element of the project, there are now strong links with and between groups and it is hoped that this will ultimately lead to a community network that becomes more self-sustaining over time.

- The training programme has been hugely successful in equipping volunteers with skills that they are now putting into practice for the benefit of their individual groups.

- The 'community funding pot' was a very important element of the Durham in Time project and has left a tangible legacy in that it enabled 13 groups to access funding for equipment and other resources, such as printers

- The project has offered valuable opportunities for staff progression – in relation to both the development and delivery of accredited and non-accredited training, as well as information and knowledge transfer between DCC staff and individuals and organisations involved in community history and heritage.

"I have loved working with the community and heritage groups; I have been able to re-establish old friendships and made many more new ones. It has been a pleasure to bring like-minded people together and for us all to learn from each other."
Sheila Forster, Development Worker (Training)

SECTION 3: Impacts and findings arising from the consultation.

"The best thing about the Durham in Time project is that it has offered me the development of a skill allowing access to information."[5]

In summing up the consultation feedback, a number of relevant findings and areas of impact are apparent:

3.1 Durham in Time has resulted in the development of new knowledge and skills and moved people 'up a level' in terms of their interests and activities.

There is no doubt that both the accredited and non-accredited training had a huge impact on the people who engaged with it. For people who were new to local history and heritage – and to learning – the training *"opened up a new world"*.

"The best thing has been… learning new skills at my age (66-75 year age group) in a friendly and not too serious atmosphere."

"At an older age I was able to gain more understanding and am more interested now in the subject."

The impact on family history and genealogy was particularly marked with new knowledge in relation to research methods assisting people to move further forward with their own family histories.

"It gave me more knowledge about family that moved to this area."

"Gave me different ideas on how to continue with family history."

"I have found out much more information on the area where my husband's maternal ancestors came from (miners).

"I was taught to look in depth at historical documents, e.g. birth certificates and websites. I saw information I had previously overlooked and I took up my old interest in my family.

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[5] Female participant, aged 66-75.

3.2 The knowledge and skills gained have significantly impacted on people's lives beyond the project.

Consultation for this report has highlighted the fact that the Durham in Time training has had a far reaching effect on people's lives. Many people who had had little or no experience of using computers before they attended the Durham in Time training talked of their *"lives being changed"* and *"the world opening up"* as a result of the new knowledge and skills they gained.

"The project has really changed the way I feel about things. I am more outgoing, I can talk about things and join in conversations – I didn't feel confident enough to do that before. I've even joined Facebook!"

"It has opened up a whole new world for me in recording, communicating and research. Best thing I ever did! I had closed my mind to using a computer and thought I couldn't do it".

3.3 The way in which the training was delivered was pivotal to its success.

Consultation for this report has highlighted that the success of the training was about far more than its content. Time and again participants stressed that they felt comfortable and at ease in training sessions which, in a number of cases, was a major factor in volunteers' decisions to engage with the project.

3.4 The social side of the project and networking was very significant.

Consultation has highlighted that the project has had a significant impact on social interaction within and across local communities. Many people highlight the fact that they made new friends which, in turn, led to increased confidence and the desire to learn more.

"It has improved my social skills."

"Improved my knowledge, learning, ability and sociability."

"I made new friends and enjoyed the classes which helped me gain confidence about myself."

"More confident. More knowledge."

3.5 The project has played an important role in the community

Durham in Time has made important links within communities by, for example, bringing together local history and heritage groups with schools and residential care homes for the elderly. Although this was just one element of the overall project, the limited activities undertaken to date have highlighted the benefits of sharing knowledge and memories within communities and across generations. There are clearly significant opportunities to explore this area of activity more within the future role of Durham in Time.

Children from Leadgate School interviewing with older residents of the village.

"The project has really helped our school to make stronger links with the community… the highlight was the interaction between the children and the older people."

Margaret Jones, Head teacher, Leadgate School.

A happy outcome of the project is that one of the older residents of the village is now a regular visitor to the school and delights the children with stories of living and growing up in Leadgate."
Durham in Time newsletter (issue 5).

"I've enjoyed the experience and the tenants enjoyed reminiscing and sharing experiences of life, families and work lives."

Member of CREATE team talking about activities with Extra Care residents.

3.6   The project has increased interest in heritage and helped to strengthen the community history and heritage infrastructure.

The project has had a significant impact on County Durham's community history and heritage groups, particularly in terms of capacity and resources. Individual volunteers have accessed new knowledge and skills that they are now using for the benefit of their groups; the social aspect of the project has brought group members closer together; and 14 groups have accessed project funding to buy equipment or carry out new activities.

"It brought me closer to my community heritage group."

"I can use the skills learned to improve group literature."

"(The project has helped us with) the development of an archiving system."

"I have expanded the family history group I am involved with and joined other heritage groups for research."

"Durham in Time has… increased my interest in heritage."

"It has given me a greater interest in social history."

CASE STUDY: BRANCEPETH ARCHIVES AND HISTORY GROUP

Background:
Brancepeth Archives and History Group was established by a small group of local people in 2006 to *"record the past and present history of Brancepeth (which included many surrounding villages prior to the mid-1800s)"*.

Involvement in Durham in Time
Members of the group have undertaken a number of DiT training courses and have accessed funding from the DiT 'Community Pot' to buy equipment.

Durham in Time highlights:

- The range of high quality training available.
- The visit to the Resource Centre at Beamish: The North of England Open Air Museum which included a particularly useful element on how to date photographs.
- The opportunities for networking and information sharing with other like-minded groups and individuals.

The group's main achievements:
As a direct result of its involvement in Durham in Time, the group has:

- Worked with DiT staff to develop the Brancepeth Archives and History Group website.
- Acquired new skills in desk top publishing which has enabled the group to design more professional posters and leaflets, including a leaflet of walks around the village.
- Gained new knowledge and research skills in genealogy which has been useful in tracing the lives of past residents of Brancepeth.
- The group is currently working on the development of an online searchable database of its collection which will be accessed through the Dit community website.

What we would like to do next:

- More training and information days organised around a specific theme to offer opportunities for networking and sharing of knowledge between County Durham's local history and heritage groups.
- Training to assist people to research the history of local buildings and areas.

"Developing the group's website has been a huge achievement. It will mean that everything in our collection that is currently stored in boxes will be accessible online to a wide audience."
Ruth Pickles, Brancepeth Archives and History Group.

SECTION 4: Meeting the project aims

There is no doubt that Durham in Time has achieved its primary aim *"to digitally record the vast records and historical collections held by community groups across County Durham".* The project has involved and engaged over 100 individuals from 30 local history and heritage groups in designing and developing 30 websites, making a collection of over 2000 digital images accessible to a worldwide audience.

This section uses the consultation feedback to assess the project's achievements in relation to the aims set at the start of the project.

1.   To support community groups in recording/archiving their local history collections through the use of modern technology".

This is probably Durham in Time's strongest impact. The project has passed on a wealth of new knowledge and skills to over 100 individuals across a wide range of IT and family history related subjects, including: archiving; record keeping; intergenerational history; conservation techniques; digital imaging; databases; genealogy and family history; powerpoint; recording oral histories; and desktop publishing. The benefits to individuals in relation to increased confidence, learning and achievement, as well as new friendships and expanded social circles is well illustrated within this report. The biggest impact in terms of community history and heritage however, is the way the new knowledge and skills has been used by individuals to conserve, record, archive and promote the collections held by over 30 local groups and societies involved in the project. A member of Brancepeth Archives and History Group quoted in the case study probably sums up this major achievement of the project when she says:

"Developing the group's website has been a huge achievement. It will mean that everything in our collection that is currently stored in boxes will be accessible online to a wide audience."

2.   To encourage widening participation and accessibility to learning programmes designed to develop skills in ICT and local history".

"Over 90 accredited and 100 unaccredited training courses have been completed through the Durham in Time project."[6]

The statement above highlights that the targets of the design and delivery of 90 accredited and 90 unaccredited training courses have been surpassed. This is in itself a major achievement, but perhaps more of an achievement is the extent to which the project has truly widened participation. Courses were delivered in small, community based centres across County Durham, which ensured the training was accessible to as many people as possible. It is clear from participant feedback, however, that the project was highly successful in its approach to intellectual as well as physical access. Many people commented on the fact that they were able to learn in a friendly, accessible and non-threatening environment, which was particularly responsive to their individual learning needs. A number of people consulted said that they had not undertaken any 'formal' learning since their school days but that the 'fun' aspect of the courses had ensured that they had enjoyed whilst they had learned.
"A very enjoyable and worthwhile experience."

The best thing was…

"… the friendliness and professionalism of the tutors."
"… the fun element of learning about my heritage."

3.   To support inter-generational activities through family learning
The Three Generations Project' (3G) was an important element of the Durham in Time programme and brought together children and older people in Leadgate to share knowledge and personal experiences (see case study overleaf). Although the project was not able to involve care home residents to the extent that was originally planned or hoped for (largely due to severe weather conditions) the project was nevertheless highly successful in bringing together young and old to compare life experiences across the generations.

In addition, residents from Extra Care were involved in reminiscence activities led by Durham in Time and CREATE, a Durham County Council in-house arts and activity service aimed predominantly at older people. Although this project, too, had to be adapted from the original memory box idea (the Extra Care residents did not want to relinquish their precious photographs and other possessions), the project was worthwhile and *"residents are excited about the possibility of a future project".[7]* Both projects have highlighted the effectiveness – and the future potential - of inter-generational projects in preserving and sharing local history within communities.

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[6] Durham in Time end of project celebration leaflet.
[7] Feedback from CREATE.

CASE STUDY: Leadgate through Time

Leadgate through Time was an inter-generational partnership between Leadgate School, the Leadgate History Group and residents of Redwell Hills Care Home. Year 1 pupils (age 5 & 6 years) took part in supervised guided walks around the village of Leadgate, comparing the appearance and uses of a number of buildings over three periods: the earliest for which records could be found; the 1960s; and the present day. The children then explored the history of the buildings – and other memories of growing up in the area – with older people. The original idea had been to work closely with residents of Redwell Hills Care Home, but snow and severe weather resulted in a change of plan. Grand-parents, great-grandparents and other family members were instead invited into school to discuss and explore changes over the years with the children.

Durham in Time highlights:
- The interaction between the children and the older people.
- The recording equipment bought as part of the project which allowed information to be recorded and the children's facial expressions to be captured.
- The confidence the children gained as a result of being involved.

Main achievements and impacts:
- The children and adults alike gained new knowledge about the history and heritage of their local area.
- The project resulted in a visual display as well as a number of recordings of the interviews between the children and the older people.
- The children were able to make connections between their own and their grandparents/great grandparents' lives.
- The project helped to strengthen links with the local community.

What we would like to do next:

"We can build on the links made as a result of the project to get parents and other family members more involved in school projects – through both school and home-based activities."
Margaret Jones, Head Teacher.

4. To enhance social and community spirit, developing networks within/without communities.

There is strong evidence that the Durham in Time project was highly successful in encouraging and facilitating networking and a sense of community. 70% of volunteers who completed in-depth project questionnaires[8] strongly agreed or agreed that *"I have made new friends and have expanded my social circle as a result of my involvement in Durham in Time".* This was emphasised by the written comments made by volunteers within the questionnaires, training evaluations and learning journals:

"It's a pleasure to come to the library as everyone is so nice and helpful. We are like one big happy family. I have made lovely new friends."

"… I've made some lovely friends through this course, including all the staff at the library. I love coming here!"

Feedback from volunteers has highlighted that the social side of the project had additional benefits too. It is clear that the fact that the training was delivered in an informal and friendly way ensured volunteers felt comfortable and at ease in their learning environments. This in turn built confidence and encouraged people to engage who would not normally take part learning activities.

"I felt like I was a dunce at school – I left at an early age and worked in a sewing factory. This was different – I wasn't going to a class, I was attending a course. I really enjoyed learning and I feel I can now hold my own in a sensible conversation."

"Before the training I had written 17 books all by hand! I was terrified of computers and I only took part because I felt very comfortable with the tutor."

"This project gave me more confidence to join in discussions and speak at meetings. I enjoyed really getting to know members who I have seen at meetings regularly. I felt encouraged to participate more fully in local events."

Finally, the networking side of the project served to bring together like-minded people and encouraged discussion and the sharing of ideas and information. Responses to "The best thing about Durham in Time was…" included:

"… continued experienced involvement with local history groups and those involved with heritage."

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[8] Questionnaires were circulated to approximately 100 DiT volunteers at the end of the project – 40 people sent back their responses.

"… meeting others with the same interests."

"… learning more about the past and meeting people of like-mind."

"… the knowledge and professionalism of the course tutors and meeting other people and sharing experiences."

"… access to training and other history groups."

"I enjoyed looking up things and having discussions within a small group."

5.   To produce CD ROMs/website/database of archived collections.
The Durham in Time website, hosted by Durham County Council, is the most tangible legacy of the Durham in Time project. The community archive section of the site now includes 32 'live' community history/heritage society websites, which has made around 3000 digital images accessible to a global audience. In addition, 15 local history and heritage groups are involved in the final stages of creating online searchable databases of their collections.

6.   To produce booklets of local community features, i.e. history walks, etc.
A number of groups have utilised skills and knowledge gained as a result of their engagement with Durham in Time to produce new resources promoting – or informing people about – local history and heritage in County Durham. In particular, a number of volunteers make reference to the fact that the training they undertook in Desktop Publishing has enabled them to contribute more to their history/heritage group's promotional materials:

"The Desktop Publishing (is useful) for leaflets/posters of events etc."
"I can use the skills earned to improve group literature."

A particularly successful example is Brancepeth Archives and History Society which used a combination of funding from the DiT Community Pot and newly acquired Desktop Publishing kills to produce 'In Step with History', a series of leaflets detailing walks in and around Brancepeth Village.

"Working on the Durham in Time project has been an immensely rewarding and enjoyable experience. The value of the knowledge and the importance of the collections held by individuals and community groups can't be under-estimated in telling the story of the north-east's rich and diverse heritage. Working with them to develop and safeguard these resources has been a pleasure."
Sam Smith, Project Worker (Website Development)

SECTION 5: Recommendations and Legacy Plan

In summing up the information presented within this report, it is clear that Durham in Time has resulted in a number of achievements that have the potential to significantly impact on the future of community history and heritage in County Durham. The project has greatly increased and enhanced the knowledge, skills and expertise of those who have undertaken training. Furthermore, most of the volunteer participants have expressed a desire to continue their involvement in Durham in Time, whether to further their individual aims, to benefit the local history and heritage societies they are members of, or to enhance their role within their working environment. In order to maximise the potential of this valuable volunteer base, the Durham in Time project team has had on-going discussions with HLF as to the future of the project and the direction it might take. The evaluation process has therefore taken into account the future of Durham in Time as much as what has gone before. This section considers the volunteer feedback gathered during the evaluation consultation alongside initial thoughts and ideas collated by the DiT project team to identify how Durham in Time might build on its achievements as a community-led initiative with a strong and sustainable future.

The need for co-ordination
Consultation with groups and individuals who have engaged with Durham in Time to date clearly highlights the need for a central 'project management' role to co-ordinate volunteers and future activity. This is very much in line with Durham County Council's future aim *"To employ a volunteer co-ordinator."*

Whilst volunteers have very actively and enthusiastically involved themselves in the full range of training and project activity offered, feedback indicates that most are still at relatively early stages of learning and volunteering. The majority of people consulted said that they would like Durham in Time to continue and that they would be interested in playing a part in its future.

When asked what is needed to take the project forward however, the majority of volunteers identified professional help, support and guidance:

"(We need)… access to professional help."
"Need to meet people doing the same and need a professional to advise."
"(We would need)… professional help and support, funding and venues."
"(We need)… professional help – lectures/slideshows/handouts etc."

Intergenerational links

Durham in Time has been successful in using local history and heritage to encourage inter-generational links, for example between schools, local communities and care homes that has the potential to be rolled out across the county. The project has clearly illustrated the value and benefits of using local history and heritage to bring together older and younger people in activities that share memories and increased knowledge and understanding between generations.

"All of the tenants got such a lot from the project… they enjoyed reminiscing and sharing experiences of life, families and work times."
Staff member, CREATE.

"The project helped the children to make connections between their lives and the lives of their parents and grandparents."
Head teacher, Leadgate School.

"We are very excited to hear about the future of Durham in Time."
Staff member, CREATE.

Presentation is an important element within this area of work, whether visual, for example exhibitions, pamphlets and guides or promotional posters and leaflets, etc. or audio visual, e.g. oral history recordings or videos. Durham County Council's aim ***"To actively engage residents of sheltered housing and extra care homes to create intergenerational exhibitions and pamphlets with members of local history and heritage groups and to teach school children about the heritage of their local areas"*** would provide schools and groups with a range of supported activities to enable them to play a valuable role in collating and making accessible their local histories.

Skills, knowledge and capacity

Volunteers have gained new transferable skills and knowledge that could be of great value to County Durham's wider history and heritage. Three quarters of the 40 volunteers who completed in-depth questionnaires about their engagement with Durham in Time said that they would like to continue their involvement with the project if possible. If this percentage is a fair representation of the total number of volunteers in the initial project, this suggests that there is a significant amount of untapped capacity able – and willing – to further develop the local history and heritage infrastructure

throughout the county. This is particularly relevant in relation to Durham County Council's aim: **"To raise awareness of the heritage of County Durham and the surrounding area by staging events, exhibitions and outreach activities in local libraries, community centres, museums and other suitable local venues".** Consultation feedback clearly indicates that groups and individuals have gained a considerable amount of IT and local history-related skills to help them to better manage their collections. This has so far resulted in the development of websites for 32 local history societies, as well as some other resources such as leaflets and basic displays. By offering new and higher-level training, the next phase of Durham in Time could equip volunteers with the knowledge and skills they need to maximise the potential of their collections. For example, new training covering presentation skills such as exhibition design, interpretation and copy writing would enable individuals and groups to become more involved in exhibiting their own – as well as other – collections, thus helping to widen access to – and participation in - local history and heritage at a community level. Consultation for this report has illustrated that there is an interest – and a desire – from volunteers for further training to benefit them as individuals as well as the groups ad societies they belong to. When asked what they would like to do next, volunteers have made a number of suggestions, including:

"(Acquire) further skills for the advantage of the groups I belong to."
"Progress further."
"Anything to do with family or local history."
"Further training in the uses of a computer to build on what I can already do."

Aspirations

This report has already highlighted the impact of Durham in Time in relation to volunteers' increased knowledge and skills. Equally important however is the impact on volunteers' confidence and future aspirations. Of the 40 participants who completed questionnaires about their involvement in the project:

68% agreed that **"My confidence has increased as a result of my involvement in Durham in Time";**
80% agreed that **"I have gained a real sense of achievement as a result of my involvement in Durham in Time";** and
80% agreed that **"I feel inspired to use the new knowledge I have gained in the future".**

Many of the people consulted made the point that they had had no previous experience of the IT or local history subject areas prior to the Durham in Time training. The skills and knowledge they had gained as a result of this first experience had whetted their appetite for more learning to help them to progress to a higher level. Just as importantly, the way in which the courses were delivered had highlighted to the participants the value and benefits to be gained from the new social circles formed as a result of the training. When

asked what they would like to do next, a number of people specifically refer to maintaining social and working relationships made during the project:

"The best thing has been… continued, experienced involvement with local history groups and those involved with heritage."
"(I would like) to support and maintain links with professionals and other colleagues."
"It has given me insight into potential projects I can do at work."

There is clearly a synergy here with Durham County Council's aim *"To maintain and extend the existing website and infrastructure developed by the Durham in Time project in order to promote partnership working between groups, advertise their activities and allow them to grow their digital collections – rather than simply archive them.*

Recommendations

In summing up this report it is clear that the Durham in Time project has resulted in a cross-county local history and heritage network that has had a huge impact on local communities. It is also clear, however, that although the project has more than met its original aims, it has only 'scratched the surface' of what could be achieved over a longer period of time. The project has delivered a significant amount of training to very willing and able volunteers which, if effectively harnessed and co-ordinated, could make a very valuable contribution to County Durham's local history and heritage infrastructure. In order to move forward and build on the project's achievements to date, this report makes the following recommendations:

1. **That the project explores and identifies the most effective way of co-ordinating Durham in Time in the future.**
   Although the project has made great strides in increasing community skills and knowledge, consultation feedback from volunteers is clear that any future activity will require professional management and co-ordination. Over time, there could be possibilities for some of the administration and co-ordination to be undertaken by volunteers. In the first instance however, the continuation of the project will require experienced and professional co-ordination and support to put into place the processes and systems required for a sustainable future.

2. **That any future programme places an emphasis on building volunteer capacity.**
   This report has highlighted the significant successes in relation to the range of training delivered by Durham in Time. Consultation feedback indicates that volunteers who have undertaken training are at varying levels in terms of skills, knowledge, experience and confidence. It is likely that some volunteers – with professional support and guidance – could take on a mentoring role. This could prove to be a very effective way to use volunteer capacity to introduce mentoring and knowledge and information sharing between groups. This would not only take on some of the project's core training and administration, but more importantly would build social capital and increase the project's long term sustainability.

3. **That the project looks to involve more people in its management nd co-ordination to ensure a more sustainable future.**
Consultation for this report indicates that the success of Durham in Time was heavily reliant on the project team – and one member of staff in particular. This is not unusual within such projects but such reliance carried with it an element of risk: if the central figure leaves, the project is in danger of collapse. Durham in Time is now in a strong position to introduce new people into the project to create a stronger and more sustainable basis and to 'spread the workload'. There are a number of opportunities to explore in this respect, including – as outlined in 2 (above) utilising volunteer skills, experience and expertise to develop mentoring, knowledge and information sharing between groups and individuals.

4. **That the project builds on its achievements to date to establish more links with schools, community organisations and other relevant agencies to further explore intergenerational activity.**
The intergenerational element of the Durham in Time project has illustrated the value and benefits of sharing memories and information across the age ranges. There is clearly a big opportunity to build on and extend this area of work to more schools and groups, agencies and organisations working with both young and elderly people. This, in turn, is highly likely to encourage more general community involvement, thus bringing together generations within small communities. It is recommended therefore that Durham in Time builds on – and extends – its links with schools, CREATE and other appropriate organisations to fully explore the future potential of this area of work.

5. **That the 'brand' aspect of Durham in Time is further promoted.**
Although all volunteers consulted were very clear that the training and other support they had accessed had been delivered by Durham County Council, a number of people were less clear that they had been involved in Durham in Time, i.e. they did not always know that the training and/or activities they undertaken were part of a bigger project. It is recommended therefore that an emphasis is placed on building the Durham in Time 'brand' as a community networking initiative to promote access and participation in local history and heritage.