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## **Five young Northumbrians develop their enterprise skills in Sweden**

Five young Northumbrians have just returned from an exhilarating exchange visit to Sweden where they were given the opportunity to gain new experiences, develop their enterprise skills and build confidence and international contacts as part of a leadership training programme run by Young Northumberland.

The local team took part in an inaugural youth conference which included youngsters from all over Sweden, Finland, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania as well as Northumberland. The conference discussed common issues for young people in rural settings such as unemployment and lack of opportunities in rural areas and enabled participants to build up their networks and contacts for the future. Workshops were led by a team of inspiring and encouraging coaches with business, creative arts and personal development backgrounds, who all provided practical advice on how to make yourself stand out from the crowd and take your future into your own hands.

After the conference, participants had the added bonus of completing a work placement in a variety of businesses – from farms, forestry and game management to an outdoor activity centre and a glass blowing craft business.

Matt Chard, from Bellingham, was one of the group who spent two weeks in Vaxjo in central southern Sweden. In Northumberland, Matt is a retained fire fighter and self employed sales person and, while in Sweden, gained his work experience with the Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Asa Experimental Forest and Research Station. He also spent a day at Varends Rescue Service. Commenting on the visit Matt said:

“This has been great experience for us all, 18 or 25, boy or girl, an absolute once in a life time opportunity. I’ve come back with loads of new friends and I’m full of ideas for new options and adventures.”

The other young Northumbrians also took full advantage of the work experience opportunities on offer. Siobhan Cardy-Brown, from Great Whittington, spent her week at Osby School of Land Management, Wilderness and Adventure Programme. Marc Tully, from Rothbury, who is in his final year of school, spent his week as a student at the Centre for Information Logistics, International Sales and Marketing (ISM). Stuart Graham, from near Wooler, a blacksmith for his day job, put his skills to the test with an alternative medium at Bergdala Studiglas Glassworks.

Iain Riddle, a farmer from Bellingham, spent his time on a Swedish farm to experience different ways with farming and forestry. He also spent one day at Ryssby School of Land Management, Hunting and Game Management. Matt, Iain and Stuart were also lucky enough to spend a day with Mikael Eriksson, the project leader for fishing tourism at Swedish Leader Linne.

**Young Northumberland**, which was started by Northumberland Uplands LEADER Local Action Group (NULAG) to work with young people to break the barriers to employment and build enterprise skills, will provide further support and training for participants throughout the lifetime of the project which runs to September 2013.

This was the first of a series of exchanges over the coming year and has been a great opportunity for eleven lucky 18-25 year olds who, although they live 1000 miles apart, live in similar rural circumstances. Seeing and experiencing how people in different places live, learn and work opens up new vistas, ideas and possibilities. NULAG runs the exchange visits in conjunction with their Swedish counterpart, Leader Linne.

Initially six young people from Southern Sweden came to the Northumberland Uplands. Among a wide range of work placements, Jonathan Krmic, a carer from Vaxjo took the chance to work with the Bellingham Heritage Centre.

David Walmsley, Education Officer at Bellingham Heritage Centre said:

"The Heritage Centre very much welcomed Jonathan and hopes, through our partnership with the TIC and Carriages Tea Room, to have given him an insight into the opportunities for young people seeking employment in heritage tourism and hospitality in rural areas. We look forward to hosting other young people in the future and benefitting from their candid and refreshing perspectives of what we do."

The other young Swedish people took part in the following work placements. Diana spent part of her week at Glendale Garden Centre at Wooler and the rest of her time she was out and about with the National Park Rangers. Emeli spent her week learning the ropes at a local cafe, Rocky Road, in Bellingham. Jesper and Daniel were kept busy at the Calvert Trust, near Kielder, where they got involved leading groups round the adventure courses, and Emma spent her time over here on 'night duty', at the Kielder Observatory.

When her group returned to Sweden Cecilia Åström, Youth Engagement Officer from Leader Linne, said: "The visit was a great success. I love their energy! What have you done with them?"

A photo album of the first exchange visit can be viewed on the Young Northumberland Facebook page.

**Young Northumberland** has a further two exchange visits arranged for 2013 and is open for applicants to take part. Anyone between 18 and 25 years from a rural background or who dreams of having a life in the countryside can apply. Contact Jane Riddell and Jennifer Hewitson on Tel: 01669 622075 email: [youth@nuleader.eu](mailto:youth@nuleader.eu).

The exchange programme is just one of a series of projects being organised by Young Northumberland in response to needs recognised by NULAG and Northumberland National Park Authority to develop opportunities for young people to live, work and become involved in the countryside and rural life.

ENDS



An evening with the Wooler Fire Cadets



Manning the longboats in Sweden

**For further information, interviews and images please contact:**

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**Notes to editors**

1. LEADER is a European approach to support rural development. It is delivered by Local Action Groups, each working in a chosen sub-region, managed by a partnership of people from public, private and civil sectors who work and live in that rural area. The Northumberland Uplands Local Action Group are one of 64 such groups active in England. Each Local Action Group has money available to allocate to projects run by businesses, organisations and community groups that help to develop their rural areas.
2. Northumberland National Park Authority supports and administrates NULAG in Northumberland.
3. Northumberland National Park cares for the landscape and cultural heritage of 405 square miles (105,000 hectares) - over a fifth of Northumberland from Hadrian's Wall to the Scottish border. A regional treasure for the North East, some six million people are within an hour's drive of our wide open and sparsely populated upland spaces. Northumberland National Park Authority is committed to sustainable living and working. For more about us please visit: [www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk](http://www.northumberlandnationalpark.org.uk). Visit the family of UK National Parks at: [www.nationalparks.gov.uk](http://www.nationalparks.gov.uk).