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Ever considered volunteering?

Wondering what to do during the long summer months while you look for a job or wait for school to begin again? Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries is encouraging people to consider volunteering.

Volunteering means many things to different people, but essentially it's an opportunity to gain work experience through your own commitment and time, to improve your skills, confidence and contacts while helping others.

Chris Catchpole, Lantra's Sector Entry and Careers Manager said: For many, volunteering provides an opportunity to road test different types of work in different industries, while making the individual more employable. Volunteering is an excellent way for people to increase their confidence and learn new skills. If someone has a clear idea about the type of career they want to follow, then volunteering is a great way to give them some experience and could give them the edge at a college, university or job interview.

While people volunteer for different reasons, it's not just them who can benefit from volunteering; it's also beneficial for businesses and organisations too. Volunteers can help sustain an organisation by being an invaluable source of additional cost-effective labour, and can bring with them fresh ideas. In addition, it can be a great way of recruiting new employees.

Heather Thompson, Chief Executive of the Ulster Wildlife Trust said: Without the dedication and expertise of our volunteers, it would be very difficult to carry out work across Northern Ireland. Volunteering has been the life blood of the organisation for many years, and I hope it will continue to be in the years to come.

Volunteering helps communities and the environment by bringing together like-minded individuals who selflessly and willingly donate their time, labour and skills. A recent report by the Commission on the Future of Volunteering, *Manifesto for Change 2008* shows how volunteers do much more than just provide extra help and fill gaps in services. According to the Commission's findings, volunteers' contributions are often distinctive and critical to how organisations are run and services are delivered. The Commission's findings also demonstrate that the majority of organisations using environmental and land-based volunteers would not function without their help.

Lantra estimates that around half a million individuals volunteer within the environmental and land-based sector across the UK. While there is a broad distribution of these volunteers across the sector, they predominately perform tasks related to the trees and timber, landscape, fencing, environmental conservation and animal care industries.

Hundreds of people volunteer across Northern Ireland every day, working in a variety of different roles. Organisations are always looking for more people to help them out, so it doesn't matter what skills you have, everybody has something they can give.

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ISSUED BY:

Lantra Press Office – Paula Smyth, Marketing, Communications and Project Co-ordinator, Tel: 028 7963 1304 or email ni.media@lantra.co.uk.

CREDIT FOR PHOTO:

Volunteering

EDITORS NOTES:

" *Assessing the suitability of ApprenticeshipsNI in the Environmental and Land-based Sector, Lantra, February 2010

" Lantra, the Sector Skills Council for environmental and land-based industries represents the interests of approximately 20,000 businesses in Northern Ireland which employ around 63,000 employees (approximately 9% of the workforce).

" Lantra is an employer-led organisation which is licensed by the UK government to drive forward the skills, training and business development agenda for the 17 industries in the sector. The industries represented are: agricultural crops; agricultural livestock; animal care; animal technology; aquaculture; environmental conservation; equine; farriery; fencing; fisheries management; floristry; game and wildlife management; horticulture, landscape and sports turf; land-based engineering; production horticulture; trees and timber; and veterinary nursing.