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### **College students first to visit tunnel works**

A group of 12 students from Newcastle College are the first outside the project team to view progress on the £7 million refurbishment of the Grade II-listed Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels between Howdon and Jarrow.

The visit was part of a Heritage Skills in Education programme organised by the North of England Civic Trust and funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund which aims to inspire and inform young people into careers in the built heritage sector.

All the students are studying construction with a view to developing careers in civil engineering.

Andy Gibson, supervising officer for North East Combined Authority, which owns the tunnels, said: “The tunnels are at a stage now where we can accommodate specialist groups of visitors. We were particularly keen to welcome the Newcastle College students to explain the complexities of refurbishing a structure like the Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels. From feedback we’ve received it appears they found their visit fascinating.”

Marie Buckingham, Regional Managing Director, GB Building Solutions Yorkshire and North East, said: “It’s really important to everyone at GBBS that we do all we can to educate, inspire and motivate young people to choose construction careers. The tunnels are different to a typical construction site, and we hope that the students found the tour and explanation of our works to date interesting and helpful to their studies.”

Elanor Johnson, Education and Engagement Co-ordinator at North of England Civic Trust, who arranged the visit, said: It’s fantastic for the students to see how our built heritage is protected by those working in the industry, and a visit to a live site is a great opportunity for them to understand the realities and complexities of working on a listed structure.”

The tunnels were closed for refurbishment in May 2013 for the first time since they opened in 1951. Part of the works includes the replacement of two of the original wooden-tread escalators with inclined lifts. They are expected to re-open in summer 2015.

**Picture caption:** (Front) Andy Gibson of NECA welcomes Newcastle College student Ben Regan to the Tyne Pedestrian and Cyclist Tunnels with (back row): Greg Wood, Newcastle College tutor, Roy Storey, Regional Planning Manager at GBBS, student Conal Stamp and Elanor Johnson of North of England Civic Trust.

[www.tynepedestrianandcyclisttunnels.co.uk](http://www.tynepedestrianandcyclisttunnels.co.uk)