Multi-million pound funding a high point for Ben Nevis and the Inner Forth

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) announced first-round passes for funding of almost £4million to conserve these unique landscapes through its Landscape Partnership Scheme.

The Landscape Partnership is an innovative programme which helps forge public and community partnerships in order to tackle the environmental needs of the local landscape. People from different backgrounds work together, through many interlinked projects, conserving and restoring the natural and built heritage while celebrating the history and heritage of the area.

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: “We are blessed with some spectacular scenery as seen in the stunning images that attract visitors from around the world, adding a significant £1.4billion a year in ‘nature’ tourism to our economy. However, landscapes which are often overlooked are just as important in terms of rare and diverse wildlife and the role they have had in shaping Scotland over centuries.

“HLF is unique in bringing a cohesive approach to the natural and built heritage of a region. Through the Landscape Partnership, huge areas of land can be conserved and managed and local communities reconnected with the natural world that often lies unseen on their doorstep.”

Environment Minister Stewart Stevenson said: “The Heritage Lottery Funding is great news for these projects. The Landscape Partnership Scheme helps to develop our landscape, protect our environment and strengthen our communities across Scotland. Managing our landscape for these multiple benefits is at the heart of the Scottish Government land use and biodiversity policies benefiting wildlife, people and the economy”

To date, the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded over £50million to almost 300 natural heritage projects across Scotland with many thousands of dedicated professionals and volunteers at the heart of them. The funding announced today is expected to attract a further £4million in partnership funding.

Nevis Landscape Partnership – A place of contrast
HLF first-round pass: £1,927,700 including development funding of £75,800

The highest mountain in the UK, Ben Nevis is a major tourist attraction visited by around 200,000 walkers each year, half of whom attempt to make it to the summit. While tourism is essential in supporting the area’s fragile economy and the sustainability of local communities, the volume of visitors is taking its toll on the path network, damaging sensitive habitats, which provide homes to rare birds and insects, and causing scarring and path spread.

As part of the Landscape Partnership, the upper reaches of the ****pony track, which is now in a dangerous condition, will be restored to provide an access route which is safe yet minimises damage to the mountain. The track was originally built by hand over 100 years ago, using skill and ingenuity to service the observatory at the summit. A new 6km riverside path will also be constructed to link with existing forest tracks and provide much needed all-ability access to the landscape for those that cannot walk the mountain paths.

The now densely overgrown Polldubh Crags, which have an important place in Scotland’s mountaineering heritage, will be restored and survey work will establish the condition of habitats for rare and endangered species of plants, butterflies, moths and mammals. Local communities and schools will be involved through events and training projects, film and social media, and an exciting venture to recreate a timber-laced stone rampart to see if the conditions for vitrification that occurred at Dun Deardail, a 2,000 year old fort, can be reproduced.

Patricia Jordan, Chair of Nevis Partnership, said; "We are delighted with this endorsement of the Nevis Area, which will allow locals and visitors alike to become involved in a wide range of heritage projects in this important international location. We are also very pleased that the Heritage Lottery Fund has recognised the considerable achievements of the Nevis Partnership, which will now be widened to include other interest groups and organisations."

Inner Forth Landscape Initiative
HLF first-round pass: £1,975,900 including development funding of £75,900

The Inner Forth Landscape Initiative takes in an area of 202km2 of the upper reaches of the Firth of Forth, from the acute meanders of the river as it travels across the Stirling floodplain to the wider estuary with its tidal banks and mudflats, from Stirling Bridge to Blackness Castle. A wealth of natural resources and rich soils, coupled with the benefits provided by the river – both as a strategic frontier and trading route, has attracted people and settlements to the area since the ice age. As a result, it is rich in heritage with 59 scheduled ancient monuments, significant military defences and battlegrounds including the Roman Antonine wall, five Historic Scotland properties and 15 conservation areas. The area is of considerable importance for natural heritage, particularly wintering and migratory wildfowl, for which the Inner Forth is of European significance. Yet the river, which is at the heart of this dynamic landscape, is often overlooked or perceived as devoid of interest due to its industrial character and much of the wildlife and history of the area remains undiscovered by locals and visitors alike.

The Landscape Partnership aims to reconnect people both physically and spiritually with the Forth to help change the perception of the area and rekindle community pride. The landscape will be restored, celebrated, and made easier to enjoy with a network of connected paths and cycle routes. Fragmented pockets of wetland and woodland will be connected to create a landscape flourishing with biodiversity and the important history of the Forth will be explored and revealed. There will be significant investment in volunteering and training with opportunities for the unemployed to take part in heritage training programmes focussed on employability.

Kate Studd, Inner Forth Landscape Partnership Officer, said:” We’re delighted that we have cleared this all important first hurdle and that the Heritage Lottery Fund recognises the potential of what can be achieved in this landscape. The Inner Forth is an area of real conservation and historic importance within an hour’s drive from Edinburgh and Glasgow. Sadly, despite this fascinating history, it is often overlooked and undervalued. With this support from HLF we will work with local communities to take action to protect and celebrate the area’s valuable heritage.”

Notes to editors

- A Landscape Partnership (LP) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicant then progresses to the second round and submits a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that LPs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided that their final proposals fully meet the programme's criteria.

- HLF's Landscape Partnerships are helping bring together members of the community as well as local, regional, and national organisations to deliver schemes which benefit some of the UK's most outstanding landscapes and rural communities. Grants currently range from £250,000 up to £2m. From 2013 this range changes to £100,000 up to £3m. The next closing date for LP applications is May 2013.

- HLF awarded the Ben Nevis Mountain Path Heritage Project £345,000 in March 2006 to restore the upper section of the historic pony track path (above Lochan Meall an t-Suidhe).

- Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. To date, it has invested over £536million in Scotland's heritage.

Further information

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