Community takes Blackwater River heritage into their own hands

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The project is run by the Blackwater Regional Partnership which is a partnership aiming to improve the environmental, economic and community development of the Blackwater region. The Blackwater Regional Partnership consists of the area covered by the local authorities of Armagh City and District Council, Monaghan County Council and Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council.

Through an exciting and varied range of educational, recreational and fun activities focused on the built, environmental and social heritage, the partnership aims to raise awareness of the river and canal and demonstrate how it can be integral to providing a sustainable future for the Blackwater region.

Paul Mullan, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Northern Ireland, explained: “This is a well thought out project that will allow the community to take ownership of, safeguard and utilise their heritage. The river and canal have been overlooked in the past and this project has the potential to turn that around by stimulating increased conservation activity, interpretation and access.

“We estimate over a 1,000 people, adults and children will be involved in the scheme which has the potential to deliver very positive long term results for the Blackwater region. HLF is delighted to give the project the necessary support required to turn the partnership’s plans into reality.”

Cllr Roger Burton, Chair of the Blackwater Regional Partnership, welcomed the funding: “This is an exciting project for the Blackwater region as the River Blackwater is the centre piece of the Blackwater Regional Partnership catchment. The Blackwater and the Ulster canal have played important roles in the development of the local region and their potential as a network for recreation and historical significance is now being recognised though this welcome funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund.”

The River Blackwater rises near the towns of Clogher and Fivemiletown and flows westward to Lough Neagh. The river and its tributaries support a wide diversity of natural habitats. Dividing counties Tyrone and Armagh, the river has been travelled for thousands of years as a highway. Early Celtic settlers, Viking raiders and English invaders all used it to their advantage and in the early 18th century plans were made to construct the first modern inland waterway system in Ireland, the Ulster Canal.

Along the routes of the river and canal, there are numerous pockets of heritage sites including natural, industrial and manmade sites, which are just waiting to be explored. In their own way the Blackwater and the Ulster Canal have played important roles in the development of the local regions and their potential as a network for recreational and historical significance is being recognised.

The two-year project will concentrate on the villages and settlements along the route of the Blackwater River and Ulster Canal – Maghery, Charlemont, Moy, Benburb, Blackwatertown, Caledon and Tynan, Middletown, Augher and Clogher which are all steeped in history. Various learning opportunities will be provided through the project, including the development of educational resources for primary schools, the creation of interpretative panels and canal and river

heritage trails, the development of a database of heritage assets, story telling workshops, a publication and a promotional campaign and celebration events, seminars and a conference.

Notes to editors

To date, Heritage Lottery Fund has invested more than £148.4million in over 1,000 projects across Northern Ireland, Including £4.8m in Dungannon and South Tyrone.

Further information

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