Bringing Hampshire’s Iron Age to life

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Plans to change that have been unveiled by Hampshire County Council, thanks to a grant of almost £42,000 from HLF. Lying south of Andover, near the town of Stockbridge, Danebury is an extensive network of fortified sites with prehistoric burial mounds and where hundreds of thousands of Iron Age artefacts have been uncovered.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: “This project will provide glimpses of how life was lived in the distant past in this part of Hampshire, bringing a new dimension to the enjoyment of a beautiful landscape.”

The project, led by Hampshire County Council’s Countryside Service who manage the site, will involve local people of all ages and will provide more information about the area, linked in with the various finds that can be seen at the Museum of the Iron Age in Andover.

Local schoolchildren will be actively involved in bringing the site alive, including storytelling at the hill fort and the reconstruction of the bases of some of the Iron Age round houses that dot the area. Excavations of the site have previously found evidence of more than 70 structures, including round houses as well as storage buildings and grain pits.

Working with the Countryside Service, Museum staff will be using a range of artefacts, including objects made from pottery and bone, to enliven the community and school projects and to help to show how the Iron Age communities would have lived, defended against attack and ultimately died on the site up to 70 generations ago. A new website about the site and its history will also be created.

Following the storytelling sessions, workshops will be run at schools by professional storytellers who will encourage the children to carry out research and develop their own stories. Three such stories will be recorded and turned into podcasts for downloading from the website.

Throughout the project there will be opportunities for volunteers to become involved and to develop heritage and conservation skills which will help preserve the site for future enjoyment. Live demonstrations of flint knapping will also be given showing how cutting implements and weapons such as spears and arrowheads would have been made by the earliest settlers.

Hampshire County Council, Executive Member for Culture and Communities, Councillor Keith Chapman said: “We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded this grant. Danebury Hill Fort is steeped in history and we are really looking forward to developing it and working closer with the local community to raise awareness amongst those young and old of its background.”

Notes to editors:

Danebury is one of an extensive network of fortified sites across the Hampshire countryside. The 40 hectare site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and includes 12.8 hectares of SSSI chalk grassland. It occupies a commanding position with magnificent views including several other hill forts and prehistoric burial mounds.

Evidence suggests that Danebury Iron Age Hill Fort was built about 3000 years ago. It started life as a Late Bronze Age stock enclosure, while the main defences that are now visible were built around 2500 years ago. The fort remained in use until c.100BC, some 140 years before the Roman invasion of AD43.

Professor Barry Cunliffe of Oxford University spent nearly 20 years from the late 1960s excavating the site, unearthing evidence of 73 roundhouses, plus many storage buildings and pits for grain.

Further information:

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