Heritage Lottery Fund enables Wildlife Trust to proceed with ambitious Cley plan

28/09/2013

This has been possible thanks to unprecedented support from members and other donors and a confirmed Heritage Grant of £1.5million from Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

With the support of HLF in place, NWT intends to purchase Pope's Marsh by November 2013. Originally, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation acquired the land through its social investment fund, giving NWT 22 months to raise the £1m to complete the purchase. NWT is able to secure the land nine months ahead of the cut-off date.

The land purchase is part of a larger, £2.6m project called A Living Coast, an ambitious vision for Cley:

- To purchase Pope's Marsh, securing for conservation the last stretch in eight kilometres of coastal nature reserves from Blakeney to Salthouse.
- Begin its initial restoration and integrate habitats such as saltmarsh, grazing marsh, reed bed and pools into the neighbouring nature reserves at Cley and Salthouse. This will create a network of internationally-vital habitats for many endangered species including marsh harrier, avocet, spoonbill, bearded tit and bittern.
- Build the Simon Aspinall Wildlife Education Centre, meeting a growing demand for information, education and events from the 110,000 visitors to Cley Marshes each year.
- Establish a diverse programme of events and educational activities for families, visitors, groups and local communities that will inspire current and future generations of conservationists on the importance of this area for wildlife.

More than £600,000 has been donated by members of NWT, the public in Norfolk and further afield, businesses, and charitable trusts. Two local charitable trusts have each donated £100,000: The Geoffrey Watling Charity and The Otter Trust. With the £1.5m from HLF, this means £2.3m has been raised towards the project. Whilst this leaves a shortfall of £300,000, NWT has sufficient funds to proceed.

Chief Executive of Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Brendan Joyce said: "This is amazing news. I am very proud of the NWT staff for all their excellent work to get us to this stage. I would also like to thank Heritage Lottery Fund for showing such confidence in us and enabling us to go forward with this landmark project.

"There are a great many people for us to now thank personally who have helped us with this either professionally or through a contribution to our appeal. Most especially our members, the wider public, many organisations and charities have who have helped us to raise a staggering £800,000 which will now act as matching funds to the Heritage Lottery Fund grant. We still have shortfall of £300,000, for which we hope to raise further funds and also use some of the Trust's vital financial reserve to underwrite.

"Having paused briefly to celebrate the fantastic news, we must now start the next leg of this journey, which is to buy Pope's Marsh, commence the restoration work and start work on the Simon Aspinall Wildlife Education Centre."

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “This project is fantastic for wildlife and visitors alike. The marshes already have an international reputation and this will be strengthened by the work that will now take place, ensuring that even more visitors can enjoy the beauty of the area.”

Notes to Editors

Norfolk Wildlife Trust
Cley Marshes is where the Wildlife Trusts movement began in 1926, when a group of 12 friends led by Dr Sydney Long had a vision of a county trust to purchase and protect this precious site and others like it.

NWT now manages over 50 nature reserves and other protected sites around the county including 10 kilometres of coastline, nine Norfolk broads, nine National Nature Reserves and five ancient woodlands.

We seek a sustainable environment for people and wildlife: where the future of wildlife is protected and enhanced through sympathetic management; and people are connected with and inspired by Norfolk's wildlife and wild spaces. For further information visit the Norfolk Wildlife Trust website.

Esmée Fairbairn Foundation
One of the largest independent foundations in the UK, Esmée Fairbairn Foundation makes grants in the region of £30-35m every year and also operates a £26m Finance Fund which invests in organisations that aim to deliver both a financial return and a social benefit. EFF aims to improve the quality of life for people and communities in the UK both now and in the future. We do this by supporting organisations that work in the arts, education and learning, the environment, and social change. For futher information vist the Esmée Fairbairn Foundation website.

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