Durham Cathedral’s natural landscape to be preserved thanks to Lottery investment

18/07/2011

The 18th-century woodlands and riverbanks that surround Durham Cathedral are now set to undergo major redevelopment works. Planned physical works include improving the structure and condition of the woodland, conserving the diverse range of trees, stabilising the banks and resurfacing the public foot paths. The area’s important wildlife habitats will undergo extensive ecological surveying and a nature reserve zone will be created in order to help local wildlife thrive.

People will be at the heart of this project - the local community will have the opportunity to get involved with the site in a variety of exciting ways. A volunteer programme will be introduced encouraging people to engage with the conservation and maintenance of the site, help to deliver guided walks and talks to visitors and support outdoor education workshops for local schools. A ‘Green Exercise’ programme will encourage people from across the community to come in, enjoy and use the space for recreation and leisure activities.

Ivor Crowther, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), said: “Durham Cathedral is one of the most spectacular buildings in the North East. This project will see the landscapes that surround the Cathedral revitalised, wildlife habitats protected and the site opened up for local people. It’s also great to see that volunteers will be involved. HLF know that they are integral to the success of our projects and make a real difference. We are delighted to be supporting this project and are looking forward to seeing the end result.”

The Very Reverend Michael Sadgrove, Dean of Durham, said: “Durham Cathedral is indivisible from its landscape environment, including the surrounding riverbanks. The wooded peninsula and deep river gorge give the Cathedral its unique and spectacular setting. They offer us the opportunity to honour and celebrate God’s concern for creation. We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting our plans to rejuvenate and care for this much-loved landscape, which is enjoyed by residents and visitors to the Cathedral as a place of peace, beauty and recreation in a busy city centre.”

Roberta Blackman-Woods MP for the City of Durham commented on the award: “This Heritage Lottery Fungrant will really revitalise this important part of Durham’s natural heritage and make an even better setting for this stunning cathedral. It’s wonderful to see that local people have been involved in the development of the project and will be the first to benefit when it’s completed. Well done to everyone who has worked so hard to make this project a reality.”

A key part of the project will be the introduction of an interactive education programme that will include workshops and training in habitat conservation and wildlife and botany surveying. Students from the local universities and colleges will also be able to use the sites as environmental case studies.

Durham Cathedral, renowned as ‘one of the great architectural experiences of Europe’, is a fantastic example of Norman architecture. Started in 1093, the Cathedral took 40 years to complete. Today, over 600,000 people visit this holy site every year and once this project is complete, it’s hoped that number will grow even more.

Notes to editors

Durham Cathedral
Durham Cathedral is a Christian Church of the Anglican Communion, the historic shrine of St Cuthbert and the seat of the Bishop of Durham. It comprises part of the Durham World Heritage Site and as well as being a place of worship it is a resource for local and visitors to Durham. Rejuvenating the Cathedral's heritage woodlands and riverbanks is one of the projects prioritised by Chapter in the Cathedral Development Plan.

The Chapter seeks to manage this historic landscape in ways which reflect the ethos and values of the Cathedral. Practically this means keeping access to the riverbanks free, welcoming visitors, providing opportunities for learning and spiritual reflection, and managing the area in such a way which is sympathetic to all who visit.

Further information

HLF Press Office: Laura Bates, 020 7591 6027, email lbates@hlf.org.uk

Durham Cathedral Press Office: Ruth Robson, 0191 374 4054, email ruth.robson@durhamcathedral.co.uk or Gaye Kirby, 0191 374 4052 , email gaye.kirby@durhamcathedral.co.uk