London wildlife’s a winner

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The new projects for London have been welcomed by naturalist and broadcaster Chris Packham. He said: "This is good news for wildlife and residents throughout London. Thousands of people will have the chance to get involved and learn more about local biodiversity and help, in practical ways, to save existing habitats and to create new ones."

In West London, the London Wildlife Trust has been awarded a confirmed grant of £280,500 to run a three-year community project along an 8 kilometre stretch of the River Crane flowing through five boroughs. As one of the longest and least fragmented ‘green corridors’ in the capital, this exciting scheme will benefit three key heritage sites – Roxbourne Park & Nature Reserve in Harrow, Yeading Brook Fields in Ealing and Hillingdon, and Crane Park in Richmond and Hounslow.

Meadows, pastures and woodland – some of which is home to the endangered watervole, rare aquatic plants and a kingfisher breeding ground – will be sustainably managed, new interpretation created and access improved making the sites much more attractive local places to visit. The project also hopes to encourage a sense of community ownership with an aim to involve up to 45 local schools and harder to reach diverse communities in the wonders and benefits of conserving and enjoying local natural habitats right on their doorstep.

Carlo Laurenzi, CEO of London Wildlife Trust, said: “London Wildlife Trust is delighted at the news that its River Crane project has been awarded an HLF grant. The Trust believes it is important to protect the capital’s wildlife and wild spaces, through the engagement of Londoners in voluntary projects within their local areas, particularly during the current, difficult financial constraints country faces.”

Two further projects have also received a heads up from HLF, focussing on London’s rich pond wildlife.

The Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust have been awarded £49,900 for a survey and educational project in Southwark, which complements a larger, London-wide five-year scheme to be run by The Froglife Trust currently being planned for 60 endangered pond sites across the capital. Declared by the Government as UK Biodiversity Action Plan priority habitats, many pond sites are fast disappearing across the country and London is no exception. They are home to many endangered species of herptiles (reptiles and amphibians) such as toads, frogs, newts and lizards, and the project, which has been given a first-round pass* and a £27,600 development grant to work up the scheme aims to offer volunteer opportunities to thousands of Londoners. They will be able to learn key skills such as species monitoring, creating habitats and restoration work as well as ongoing site management. Exciting activities for families are also in the pipeline including pond dipping, ‘reptile rummages’ and working with allotment holders to encourage habitats.

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund London, explained how projects like this are so important to the capitals’ wildlife and local communities: “Nature enriches life in cities but its conservation depends on community support and active participation. These projects will mobilise local volunteers in helping to protect London’s natural habitats and give them a vast array of opportunities to learn valuable and exciting new skills in the process.”

Have your say: HLF’s three-month consultation Shaping the future – for heritage, for everyone is now live on our website and all views will help shape HLF’s strategy from 2013 to 2019. This is people’s chance to tell us what they think we should continue to do and what we should do differently. To respond to the consultation and to view the video

until 26 April 2011.

Notes to editors

River and pond wildlife in London: The River Crane is one of the longest (13.6km) and least fragmented green corridors in London. It runs north through five London boroughs. The HLF-funded project will focus on three principle areas: Roxbourne Park and Nature Reserve managed by Harrow Council; Yeading Brook Fields owned jointly by Ealing and Hillingdon Councils; and Crane Park owned jointly by Richmond and Hounslow Councils.

London Wildlife Trust is the only charity dedicated solely to protecting the capital's wildlife and wild spaces, engaging London's diverse communities through access to our nature reserves, campaigning, volunteering and education. For more information on how to get involved in this project please call 020 8755 2339. www.wildlondon.org.uk

Throughout the UK in the past 50 years, one in three ponds has disappeared and there has been a corresponding decline in amphibian numbers. A report published in February 2010 said that 80% of the remaining ponds were in either a poor or very poor condition.

Ten of the 14 species of reptile and amphibian found in the UK are endangered. The Greenspace Information for Greater London (GIGL) database is deficient in information about reptiles and amphibians because of a lack of a structured programme of activities, including surveys and a shortage of experienced individuals able to identify species.

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. HLF has supported 30,000 projects, allocating £4.5billion across the UK including £868million to London alone.

***** A first-round pass means the project meets our criteria for funding and we believe it has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals. Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award.

On occasion an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Further information

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