The Garden of England is buzzing with good news for bees

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded £77,200 to the BumbleBee Alliance, based in Aylesham near Canterbury, for its Bee Inspired project.

The aim of Bee Inspired is to involve 230 young people with disabilities and learning difficulties in discovering all about bees and promoting their newfound bee knowledge around the county. The young people, up to the age of 25, will be drawn from around the former East Kent coalfields area.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, explains more: "Bees are a threatened species. During the course of this project these young people will discover the important role bees play in our natural environment in pollinating a third of our food and also the pollination of many endangered wild flowers. The HLF grant will enable them to attend workshops where they will find out how to identify different types of bees, learn about their habitats, the crucial role bees play in the food chain and the threats to their existence."

The workshops will be held in local schools and youth clubs but the participants will also visit hives and natural meadows and help with wild flower planting. This will ensure they experience and enjoy bees in their natural setting as well as learning about them in the classroom.

Bee surveys and community events are planned and participants will produce learning materials including leaflets, a DVD and viral videos, which will be uploaded onto a Bee Inspired website which they will help to build.

The project also plans to increase the amount of learning activities and resources for people with disabilities and special educational needs, by including Makaton, British Sign Language and other specialist communication tools.

Ten of the participants will train as Young Heritage Bee Guides and it will be their role to disseminate their learning about bee heritage and conservation to local schools and youth groups. They will also have the opportunity to volunteer for the Bumblebee Alliance, a Community Interest Company (CIC) set up to work with young people with a range of special needs including those with profound disabilities.

"We are delighted with the news of receiving funding from HLF for the Bee Inspired project," says David Moniz of the Bumblebee Alliance: "it will give children with special needs and from disadvantaged communities a great opportunity to learn and participate in activities concerning bees. The children will learn that there is no need to be afraid of bees, as many people are, and to promote what they learn to their families and friends. We want people to enjoy and respect wildlife and nature and to understand how our natural heritage is due to bees and other insects. Bees contribute toward a healthy biodiversity and the natural ecosystem."

Further information

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