Important habitats to be saved

21/12/2010

This award will enable the Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough to conserve the natural heritage of key sites on the Greensand Ridge.

The ridge spreads through Bedfordshire and the two nature reserves at Flitwick Moor and Cooper's Hill form part of it. Flitwick Moor is considered the most important area of wetland habitat in Bedfordshire, linked by clean spring water from the Greensand.

At Flitwick Moor, the project will create new open water areas and identify the distribution and significance of key communities. This project will improve the structure and condition of heather plants, manage the encroachment of scrub and woodland, control invasive plant species and halt the dramatic loss of lowland heath habitat in Cooper's Hill Nature Reserve.

Local volunteers will be recruited to assist with conservation tasks and monitoring the ecology of the two sites. They will receive training in plant and animal life identification and survey techniques.

Over 100 school children will also have the opportunity to be involved in the project through practical and classroom activities. The local community will be able to participate through planned outreach talks, guided walks and public events.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: "This project provides a great opportunity for the local community to get involved and preserve these special nature reserves. With the help of the Wildlife Trust, many local people will learn conservation skills to safeguard the long term future of this natural heritage."

Chief Executive of the Wildlife Trust, Brian Eversham, said: "These sites have a unique atmosphere and their habitats are totally unlike most of central England, from purple heather to mossy, ferny Alder woods. They contain some of the most exciting wildlife in our region, including nationally rare invertebrates, lichens, mosses and fungi. The Understanding the Greensand project will allow us to find out more about these special sites and the species they support, through ecological monitoring that will inform conservation management. By involving the local school groups and volunteers, we will give the local community the opportunity to take part in the exploration and restoration of these fantastic sites, so that they can be conserved for future generations."

The project, now underway, will end in October 2012 and will see surveys conducted at the beginning and end of the project. They will ensure the needs of the site users work in harmony with conservation, and evaluate the projects success.

Notes to editors

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 more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, including £4,812,825 in funding to

Central Bedfordshire alone.

Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Peterborough Wildlife Trust
Bringing people together to take action for wildlife is the Trust's mission. We manage 126 nature reserves - all of them free to visit – and 95% of the population live within five miles of one of our reserves. We are working to make these wildlife havens bigger, better and more joined-up – vital to help wildlife to adapt to a changing climate. By gathering valuable information about wildlife and working with other landowners the Trust also monitors and safeguards wildlife beyond the boundary of its reserves. www.wildlifebcnp.org

Further information

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