Community fruitfulness reaps rewards for Kent Orchards for Everyone

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This exciting project aims to support and inspire a web of communities in the active involvement, participation and celebration of traditional orchard heritage in Kent over the next four years.

The Kent Orchards for Everyone project will carry out essential restoration and conservation work with 15 traditional community orchards in Kent. There will be opportunities for volunteers to discover their village's orchard heritage and learn new orchard management skills. It will encompass workshops, an educational programme and digitise information about each orchard through a single web portal allowing online public access to the all that is traditional orchards. To celebrate this heritage, fruitful events are planned with pressings and tastings.

This project will culminate with the inauguration of a Kent Orchard Trust.

Commenting on the award, Nick Johannsen, Director of the Kent Downs AONB said: "Our traditional orchards have declined hugely over the past 50 years or so, of course we understand that with new productive varieties of fruit farming landscapes change, however our traditional orchards remain a very much valued component of the Kentish landscape and we really need to invest in their future.

"The Kent Orchards for Everyone project will focus on community owned traditional orchards and we will make the investments we need, and build the skills and expertise amongst the communities and countryside partnerships to assure their future management. We are really excited about this project and delighted it has been supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund."

Pippa Palmar, Orchards for Everyone Development Officer said: "This is a fantastic opportunity to engage with these communities and establish good management practices within their community orchards. It will stimulate those nostalgic memories of years gone by and create a footplate for the communities to celebrate their heritage, to volunteer and collaborate in surveys and educational events in their traditional orchards."

Caroline Drewett from the Kent Countryside Partnerships said: "We are so pleased to receive HLF's funding, it will help us considerably to support our local communities on the ground in conserving, enhancing, celebrating and enjoying their traditional Kentish orchards."

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: "Kent's orchards play such an important role in maintaining the county's biodiversity, as well as its traditions. This project will help to protect both and will also encourage communities to get involved and learn afresh the skills that are an intricate part of this heritage."

Hugh Robertson, MP for Faversham and Mid Kent and Minister for Sport, said: "The culture and traditions surrounding Kent's orchards are ingrained in the landscape, art, crafts and personal memories of the Garden of England. I have always been a keen supporter of the preservation of the Kent countryside. It was the subject of my Maiden Speech in Parliament. I welcome this project's desire to re-acquaint today's generation with this horticultural heritage and to pass on skills and expertise so as to restore and conserve these orchards for the future."

Notes to editors

The Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB)
The Kent Downs AONB is a nationally protected landscape; it covers about a quarter of Kent including the North Downs and areas of the Greensand Ridge and Romney Marsh. The Kent Downs landscape is characterised by chalk hills, secluded valleys and a dramatic scarp with stunning views. A closer look uncovers a wealth of distinctive villages, narrow hedge-bound lanes and areas of chalk grassland, woodland and open farmland all waiting to be explored. The Kent Downs AONB Unit works in partnership with other organisations and local people to conserve and enhance the landscape of the Kent Downs AONB. Visit the Kent Downs AONB website for more information.

Medway Valley Countryside Partnership – Kent Countryside Management Partnerships
The Medway Valley Countryside Partnership is a not for profit environmental organisation within the Kent Countryside Management Partnerships Service. The partnership's vision is to 'Support and Engage Communities to Manage, Enhance, Explore and Be Inspired by their Natural Environment'.

Further information

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