£539,000 to conserve Lightshaw Meadows

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Community Forests Northwest has been awarded £539,300 by the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to fund the conservation of one of the area's most important natural landscapes.

The grant will be used to purchase Lightshaw Meadows - a Site of Special Scientific Interest - and preserve this significant wetland landscape. Delivered in partnership with Red Rose Forest, Lancashire Wildlife Trust and the Environment Agency, this will be a major contribution to the development of Wigan's Greenheart Regional Park.

The scheme will also introduce public access to the site for the first time, creating volunteer opportunities so that local people can take part in the future management of the meadows.

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "Lightshaw Meadows is a wonderful example of the balance of natural and industrial heritage in the North West. The effect of shallow-mining on the landscape has resulted in a mosaic of different habitats that are home to species that are in decline elsewhere, making a huge contribution to the biodiversity of the UK as a whole. The conservation of the site will ensure that the meadows can be enjoyed by local people for many generations to come."

Tony Hothersall, Forest Director, Red Rose Forest, said: "We are delighted that Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting this important project in Wigan. Community Forests North West, Red Rose Forest and Lancashire Wildlife Trust will be improving the area for an exciting range of wildlife, and giving people the chance to learn more about the history of the area and its special natural heritage. Community forestry is about so much more than just trees, and this is a great example of organisations working together on the development of a wet grassland nature reserve and of course, for the benefits for local people."

Lightshaw Meadows form part of the Wigan Flashes, between Wigan and Leigh, and are an important legacy from the area's industrial past. These wetlands were created by flooding caused by shallow-mining subsidence.

The resulting landscape contains a number of important wildlife habitats including large open bodies of water, reedbed, fen, wet woodland and flower rich meadows. Over 200 species of bird, 15 species of dragonfly and 6 species of orchid have been recorded. These include a number of species that are in decline, such as the Skylark, Willow Tit, Snipe and Redshank. This project will ensure the survival and conservation of these species and habitats.

Volunteer opportunities for local people will include practical conservation, wetland and woodland management, tree-planting and surveying species.

Education programmes will be created with local schools, giving young people the chance to learn about biodiversity, natural and industrial heritage. At the same time, Lightshaw Meadows will be able to be enjoyed by a wide range of visitors from casual walkers, to bird-watchers and local historians.

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 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK

Community Forests North West was created in 2001 to generate funding and raise awareness of the Northwest region's two Community Forests – Red Rose Forest in Greater Manchester and The Mersey Forest in Merseyside and North Cheshire. In 2005 The Pennine Edge Forest joined Community Forests North West. Community Forests North West is a charitable company that supports the three forestry initiatives to continue their vital work, increasing tree cover across the Northwest region and involving the local communities and businesses in the creation of attractive environments in which they can thrive.

More than 50 million trees will be planted over the next 40 years to create the Forests and there are a host of opportunities for businesses and individuals to get involved. Community Forests North West is a registered charity and non-profit making company limited by guarantee. Community Forests Northwest Ltd – Charity registration number 1072706

Red Rose Forest is a leading environmental regeneration initiative in Greater Manchester and is one of 12 Community Forests established across England. We are a partnership of Natural England, the Forestry Commission and the Metropolitan Boroughs of Bolton, Bury, Trafford and Wigan and the Cities of Manchester and Salford. Over forty years we will help to transform a large part of Greater Manchester into a greener, healthier and more satisfying place to live, work and invest. At the heart of our strategy is the involvement of a wide partnership of local communities, businesses and other partners in the environmental, social and economic regeneration of the area. United Utilities is the principal private sector supporter of the Forest and together we have worked in a close partnership over the last 10 years.

Lancashire Wildlife Trust is dedicated to the protection and promotion of the wildlife in Lancashire, seven boroughs of Greater Manchester and four of Merseyside, all lying North of the River Mersey. LWT manages 38 Nature Reserves, and 19 Local Nature Reserves covering acres of woodland, wetland, upland and meadow. Our education team reach over 30,000 children every year. LWT has 18,000 members, and over 600 volunteers. LWT provides protection for endangered species, owns and manages nature reserves, educates and inspires children to carry on the work, offers opportunities for people to volunteer in worthwhile conservation projects and campaigns at every level of government. We are involved with numerous community projects and provide specialist training for environmental volunteers. We protect urban wildlife by creating green spaces in towns and promoting sustainable lifestyles. We work with Local Authorities, influencing the decision makers and resisting developments that would damage wildlife habitat. www.lancswt.org.uk

The Environment Agency is responsible to the Secretary of State for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs. The Environment Agency works closely, and in partnership with the nature conservation agencies Natural England and with local authorities. We have three main roles: as an environmental regulator - using permits to set the conditions operators must comply with so that their activities do not adversely impact on the environment; an environmental operator– playing a central role in managing flood risk; and as an independent environmental adviser to government and wider business.

Further information

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