Light shed on Northumberland’s heritage

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A volunteer-led project to explore the 19th-century Kielder Viaduct, now a listed Ancient Monument and ‘Batlife’, a wildlife project aiming to protect a rare species of bat, have each received Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grants of £34,500 and £36,600 respectively, and can now get their projects underway.

Trai Anfield, Heritage Lottery Fund North East Committee member, said: "These two projects reflect the wonderful breadth of heritage we have here in Northumberland. Today’s HLF investment will not only enable people to have better access to our heritage but will also offer a fantastic range of training and volunteering opportunities, ranging from developing archives and oral histories to supporting the local natural environment. We are delighted to be supporting these projects that will provide real and far-reaching benefits."

Kielder Viaduct, Kielder Water & Forest Park Development Trust, £34,500
Kielder Viaduct, engineered in 1862 to carry the Border Counties Railway over the North Tyne River, consists of seven semi-circular masonry skew arches that follow the river’s winding course. In 1969, the Viaduct passed into the ownership of the Northumberland and Newcastle Society, purchased for a £. In 2004, the society struck up a partnership with Kielder Partnership, now Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust, which created part of a network of paths around northern Europe’s largest man-made reservoir, Kielder Water.

Encouraged by the 50th anniversary celebrations of the viaduct in 2012, volunteers were inspired to develop this new project. Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust will be working together on a six-month project focussing on the social and industrial heritage surrounding the Kielder Viaduct. With help from the newly formed Kielder History Group, volunteers will gather archived information on the railway as well as collecting stories that fill certain gaps in the viaducts history. The stories will then be retold as part of a fascinating new educational programme for schools and the local community which will include tours and open days.

Julie Webb, from Kielder History Group, said: "Ever since I moved to Kielder, I’ve been interested in the history of the place. We have been holding open days and gathering magazines, photos and fascinating stories from the local community. This funding will really help us to focus on this area of our community’s history and truly bring this fascinating subject to the enjoyment of other locals and visitors to Kielder Water and Forest Park alike."

Batlife, National Trust North, £36,900
Batlife is an exciting three-year wildlife conservation project that will research the colony of bats that live along the Hadrian’s Wall path as well as in and around the surrounding lakes and woods. The project hopes to encourage more people to learn about the bats that over the years have taken up residence in this historic place. The Batlife project will begin by training 15 volunteers to become knowledgeable group leaders that work in small groups to collect bat-data, record bat identification, run an overnight bat watch, run workshops in bat-box building, and help develop a bat walk and a digital bat trail. Batlife will become a family favourite with bat focussed Halloween activities to showcase this important mammal.

18 UK species of bat are found roosting or foraging around National Trust properties. Some of the largest, rarest and most important UK roosts are in buildings and trees owned by the trust. Roosts are carefully monitored with help from local volunteers and bat surveys of the surrounding land are also carried out.

Eric Wilton, National Trust, Hadrian's Wall Countryside Manager, said: "This is a fantastic project that will enable us to link closely with our local community and schools to help us all gain a better understanding of the bat species of Northumberland and the environment in which they live. Working with local experts people will get the opportunity to survey and monitor bats in their natural environment gaining hands on experience of a truly inspirational conservation project. We plan to encourage a lasting legacy by educating, involving and encouraging people to have the confidence to carry out surveys that will help increase our understanding of this wonderful mammal."

Notes to editors

Kielder Water and Forest Park, which spans 250 square miles, is home to the largest forest in England and the largest man-made lake in northern Europe. It was voted the most tranquil place in England by the Campaign to Protect Rural England. For more information visit "Kielder Water and Forest Park website.

Kielder Water and Forest Park Development Trust is a registered charity working at Kielder to promote sustainable development, provide recreational facilities, improve knowledge of the natural environment and encourage the arts. The Trust works with the range of communities to benefit from these activities.

Members, who have appointed directors / trustees to serve on the board, are Northumbrian Water, Forestry Commission, Calvert Trust Kielder and Northumberland County Council. Affiliate organisations that are not members but have a close working relationship with KWFPDT include Arts Council England, Northumberland Wildlife Trust, Environment Agency, The Scout Association and local decision making bodies such as the parish councils.

Further information

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