Limestone launch a boost for region

29/09/2011

A Heritage Skills Festival marked the official launch of a major environmental project this week. The three-day event at Souter Lighthouse, South Shields, gives school pupils, professionals and members of the public the chance to have a go at traditional heritage skills and learn more about the people working in the sector.

On Friday, it also played host to the official signing of the agreement that will see a £2.8m boost to some of the regions most important environmental assets – its Magnesian Limestone Grasslands, based upon a unique and special geology.

The impressive sum includes a £1.9m grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and will support the delivery of an exciting programme of events and opportunities designed to help the public learn more about Limestone Pavement.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said: "We at HLF are delighted to be able to support the Limestone Landscapes Project, and the fantastic activities that will be taking place.

"This imaginative scheme will draw together the threads of proud cultural histories and precious natural heritage that permeate the Limestone Plateau. The project will enable local communities to be directly involved in conservation activities whilst ensuring new opportunities are created for visitors to explore, enjoy and learn about this fascinating landscape."

Chair of the Limestone Landscapes Partnership Board, Durham County Councillor, Eddie Tomlinson, said: "By getting all the partners involved in delivering this wonderful conservation campaign, we are showing publically our commitment to preserving a vital part of our heritage.

"Equally importantly though, we are saying that the Limestone Plateau is a regional treasure offering people of all ages and interests a unique insight in to our culture and heritage. The three year programme of events that this fantastic grant will help fund will ensure we can showcase the flora and fauna, encourage families to explore it together and teach the next generation how they can pay their part in ensuring its here for generations to come."

The Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau is a wide area stretching almost from the Tyne to Tees and from the coast to central Durham. It includes parts of five different local authority areas: Sunderland; South Tyneside; Hartlepool; Durham and Darlington. The area is unique, with common themes and patterns in the landscape and strong links between natural and cultural heritage.

In December 2010, the HLF confirmed that the region's submission to the Landscape Partnership Scheme at had been successful. This unlocked a grant worth £1.9m over three years and will attract a further £925,000 in match funding and in-kind contributions, to help conserve the distinctive character of the Durham Magnesian Limestone Plateau.

Notes to editors

Over the three years of the programme, work will take place on the 25 projects detailed here on the Limestone Landscapes website. The projects have links to biodiversity, geodiversity, cultural heritage and the historic environment within this landscape.

Durham County Council hosts the Limestone Landscapes Core Team, an externally funded (Heritage Lottery Fund) partnership that is made up of: Sunderland City Council; South Tyneside Council; Hartlepool Council; Groundwork North East; National Trust; Natural England; Woodland Trust; Durham Wildlife Trust; Countryside Landowners Association; National Farmers Union; Tees Valley RIGS.