Lower Derwent Valley Landscape Partnership wins HLF support

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The £2.5million Lower Derwent Valley project aims to safeguard and restore the iconic landscape setting of the Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site, where the factory system began at the start of the industrial revolution. The area extends from Matlock Bath, with its dramatic limestone gorge, south through a stunningly beautiful wooded river valley broadening into a wide floodplain as it approaches Derby, and on into the city centre itself.

Development funding of £87,100 has been awarded to help the partnership work with communities to progress their plans and apply for a full grant at a later date.

The project aims to involve the public, particularly local communities, farmers and landowners, to ensure that both rural and urban communities can feel proud of their landscape, understand why it is important and help with its long term care. This will include:

- Providing a grant scheme, advice and help with funding bids for landscape improvements
- Providing access and interpretation so that people can experience and enjoy the Valley to its full
- Training in a variety of traditional skills, centred on the new Derbyshire Eco Centre near Wirksworth
- Restoring, linking and extending wildlife habitats
- Protecting and restoring landscape features like dry stone walls, hedgerows and ancient trees
- Involving volunteers to survey and safeguard archaeological features and geological sites
- Offering opportunities for the public to get involved in arts activities, education activities with schools, a Forest Schools programme and ‘twinning’ rural and urban communities

While the World Heritage Site is now globally recognised, less attention has been given to the heritage importance of the wider landscape, which includes internationally important ancient woodlands and archaeological sites which date from way before the mills of the industrial revolution. As a result, it has been slowly deteriorating, often due to unintended damage or neglect. Through this project, we are sure that we can make a real difference so that this living landscape can thrive once again.

Councillor Andrew Lewer, Leader of Derbyshire County Council and Chairman of the World Heritage Site Partnership, said: “I am delighted with this support from HLF. It means that we can really engage the people of Derbyshire in protecting and enjoying the landscapes within and around the World Heritage Site”.

Dan Abrahams of Natural England (who chairs the partnership) said: “We’re delighted that the HLF has given us this support. This project brings together for the first time a wide ranging partnership of conservationists, industrial heritage experts, geologists, artists, educators and local authorities. Together, we’re developing a really exciting project to transform this valley and engage the people who live and work in it.”

Explaining the importance of HLF’s support, Emma Sayer, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: “As the cradle of the Industrial Revolution, the Derwent Valley is recognised throughout the world as one of our most important heritage treasures. This imaginative Landscape Partnership scheme will create a future where local communities are

directly involved in preserving the natural and cultural heritage of the Derwent Valley, whilst new opportunities are created for visitors from near and far to explore, enjoy and learn about this fascinating landscape."

Notes to editors

[1] A Landscape Partnership (LP) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by HLF for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicant then progresses to the second round and submits a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that LPs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided that their final proposals fully meet the programme's criteria.

[2] HLF's Landscape Partnerships are helping bring together members of the community as well as local, regional, and national organisations to deliver schemes which benefit some of the UK's most outstanding landscapes and rural communities. Grants range from £250,000 up to £2m. The next closing date for LP applications is 28 February 2012.

About the Partnership

The project has been put together by a partnership of Natural England, Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, Derbyshire County Council, English Heritage, National Stone Centre, Fleet Arts, The Arkwright Society, Environment Agency, Derwent Valley Mills World Heritage Site Partnership, Forestry Commission and Derby City Council.

About Derbyshire Wildlife Trust

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust is leading on the project on behalf of the partnership. Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, a Registered Charity, is the only organisation working to protect all wildlife across the county. We are one of 47 in The Wildlife Trusts Partnership, a nationwide network of local trusts. We manage 41 nature reserves throughout Derbyshire, advise local authorities and landowners on nature conservation issues and run a range of conservation and education projects. We are committed to The Wildlife Trusts' strategy of creating Living Landscapes – robust, connected landscapes that address the challenges facing our wildlife and countryside. Find out more at www.derbyshirewildlifetrust.org.uk.

Further information

For more information, please call Katie Owen, HLF press office, on 020 7591 6036 / 07973 613 820.

If you would like further details or to get involved in the development of this exciting project, please contact Matthew Croney at Derbyshire Wildlife Trust on 01773 881 188 or email: mcroney@derbyshirewt.co.uk.