Lower Derwent Valley landscape wins the Lottery

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The DerwentWISE partnership, led by Derbyshire Wildlife Trust, applied for the funding as part of a £2.45million, five-year project involving 14 partners.

The project is about rediscovering and valuing the landscape of the Lower Derwent Valley for its beauty, wildlife and its resources of wood, water and stone which have inspired mankind's development through time. It focuses on the landscape around 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.

DerwentWISE has four themes – conserving or restoring heritage; increasing community participation; improving access; learning, training and skills. Many of the activities are about the hidden or forgotten beauty of the valley. In the woodlands for example there will be projects to remove rhododendron, plant native tree species and open up iconic views over the valley. Arts projects will engage and inspire people about woodlands and new access routes will be created to enjoy the views. There will be opportunities to learn traditional woodland skills such as coppicing and charcoal making, while school groups will be taken on visits into the woods to discover and explore these magical places.

Work will now start to recruit staff to deliver the project. These will include a team manager, two community engagement officers and a finance and administration officer.

Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's Director of Living Landscapes Matthew Croney said: "We are delighted by this announcement and are looking forward to starting work on the project. While the mills of the World Heritage Site are now globally recognised, less attention has been given to the wider landscape, which attracted those industrialists in the first place.

"The valley includes lots of forgotten gems such as internationally important ancient woodlands and archaeological sites which date from way before the mills of the industrial revolution. Unfortunately, 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 landscape can thrive once again. DerwentWISE has been five years in the making and the partnership would like to sincerely thank everyone who has contributed to it."

Vanessa Harbar, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, added: "Our countryside is a precious asset under ever-increasing pressure. HLF's Landscape Partnership programme has gone from strength to strength, encouraging long-term partnerships and innovative ways of working. The result has been greater understanding, access and appreciation of our natural environment for the people living and working in and visiting these areas. We're delighted to confirm our support for such an important scheme. This investment will leave a lasting legacy of landscape conservation and management."

A detailed Landscape Conservation Action Plan, which formed the main basis of the funding application, is available to download from Derbyshire Wildlife Trust's website.

Notes to editors

About DerwentWISE

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; Derbyshire Dales District Council; Forestry Commission and Derby City Council; Amber Valley CVS; Derby University and Amber Valley Borough Council, supported by the National Farmers Union.

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 42 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.

Further information

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