Project to save traditional wildflower meadows near Bicester wins support

14/12/2012

A development grant of £23,500 will help BBOWT to develop the Meadow Farm project in detail and apply for the full grant of £758,400 at a later date.

Chris Williams, Head of Conservation and Education in Buckinghamshire, explains why BBOWT is leading this project: “Meadow Farm is a wonderful example of a precious and disappearing landscape. The ancient ridge and furrow fields show that it hasn’t been ploughed in living memory; around 95% of meadows like this have been lost in Buckinghamshire since the Second World War. Each summer the colourful wild flowers at Meadow Farm show what the floodplain meadows of the Upper Ray Living Landscape, east of Bicester used to be like.”

During the next six months BBOWT will be working with local communities from Bicester and the surrounding villages to identify which projects people want to see at Meadow Farm. These could include: ‘Meet the Wildlife’ family events, informal workshops for artists and photographers being inspired by the farm’s beauty and agricultural heritage, and school visits for children to learn about wildlife conservation.

BBOWT proposes to run guided walks for people to discover Meadow Farm’s wonderful wildlife such as otters, butterflies and birds, work parties for people to join in and look after the wildlife habitats, and workshops for traditional conservation skills such as scything.

Stuart McLeod, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South East England, said: "We are delighted to be giving our initial support to the Meadow Farm project, which will see lots of opportunities for volunteers and people of all ages to get involved in the natural heritage on their doorstep. We look forward to working with BBOWT and receiving the full application in the future."

Notes to editors

Initial support means the project meets Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) criteria for funding and HLF believes the project has potential to deliver high-quality benefits and value for Lottery money. The application was in competition with other supportable projects, so a first-round pass is an endorsement of outline proposals.

Having been awarded a first-round pass, the project now has up to two years to submit fully developed proposals to compete for a firm award. On occasions, an applicant with a first-round pass will also be awarded development funding towards the development of their scheme.

Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT) is one of 47 wildlife trusts across the UK working to achieve the shared aim of securing a better future for wildlife. BBOWT’s vision is to create a region rich in wildlife and appreciated by all. BBOWT manages 80 nature reserves across the three counties, works with other agencies and individuals to help safeguard the wider countryside, and aims to inspire people to take action for wildlife. BBOWT has over 54,000 members.

Upper Ray Living Landscape: In 2007, BBOWT identified the Upper Ray Valley as one of three Living Landscape areas in our region. This Living Landscape covers 42km². Our goal is to restore and create a wildlife-rich landscape that will offer opportunities for wildlife to disperse from isolated areas and to move through the landscape to adapt to agricultural intensification, development and climate change. BBOWT currently owns and manages 144 hectares of rare floodplain meadows across the Upper River Ray Living Landscape.

Further information

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