Morecambe Bay Partnership wins HLF support

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Development funding of £100,000 has also been awarded to help the Partnership progress their plans to apply for a full grant at a later date.

The Headlands to Headspace project aims to make the bay better appreciated and engage local people in looking after its special and distinctive features.

Projects are proposed to:

- celebrate the bay's unique cultural heritage and stunning landscapes;
- support local people to restore and reconnect wildlife habitats, protect the tidal islands and study birds and seals;
- develop the railway stations as hubs to access key sites;
- support education projects and oral history looking at the traditions of fishing in the Bay;
- support joint work between Lancaster Maritime and Barrow Dock Museums; and
- community training in archaeology, surveying, safeguarding monuments and habitats.

Morecambe Bay is of exceptional heritage importance. It is the largest intertidal area in the UK where four estuaries join in a horseshoe-shaped bay of spectacular scale and grandeur. It is a unique and awe-inspiring place, a kaleidoscope of water and light; sea and sky; sound, texture and colour. The bay itself is flanked by a diverse coastal mosaic of headlands, tidal islands, cliffs, shingle, saltmarsh, wetlands and mosses. These surrounding landscapes reveal a narrative of man's work, shaping the land and tied to the coastline from one millennium to the next.

The bay is internationally significant for wildlife, one of the UK's most important biodiversity hotspots, supporting exceptional populations of birds, flora and invertebrates. It has tremendous cultural richness and is nationally important for its maritime and First and Second World War heritage, rich archaeology and concentration of ritual and religious sites. And it is highly valued by our coastal communities who look towards one another across the Bay.

Susannah Bleakley who co-ordinated the bid said: "We are delighted, this is great news for Morecambe Bay and the many people who have supported our work on the bid. It is very encouraging; very heartening to have this level of support from the Lottery, and it should help us to make more of Morecambe Bay.

"As the project develops, we want local people to learn about how special Morecambe Bay really is, to share our excitement and get involved in projects to look after the Bay. We really hope that the significance of the bay will be much better appreciated as we develop these projects over the coming years."

Captain Graham Maclean, chair of Morecambe Bay Partnership and formerly the General Manger of Heysham Port, said: "This is an important achievement for the Morecambe Bay Partnership, because it demonstrates that partnership working around the bay can attract investment and funding. Now, we need to ensure is that this is first of many successes allowing us to make more good things happen - so the bay is recognised as the unique natural and cultural asset it deserves to be. Sadly the bay is sometimes marginalised and fragmented by the county boundary, but this project shows the power of the bay as a unifying force that can drive positive changes for our communities."

Explaining the importance of HLF's support, Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "We are delighted to be able to award this first-round pass to the Morecambe Bay Partnership. At HLF we look to support bold innovative projects such as this, which offer real potential to make a difference to people's lives. This imaginative scheme will draw together the threads of proud cultural histories and precious natural heritage that permeate Morecambe Bay, aiming to create a future where local communities are directly involved in conservation activities 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 the Heritage Lottery Fund (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 Morecambe Bay Partnership

Morecambe Bay Partnership takes action to improve the environment and quality of life around the Bay. The Partnership co-ordinates activities around the Bay from Barrow to Fleetwood and helps to bring local people and organisations together.

Further information

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