Moseley Bog celebrates Heritage Lottery Fund win for 'Tolkien's playground' Nature Reserve

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The project, which will be undertaken by The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, hopes to both restore Moseley Bog and Joy's Wood Local Nature Reserve as a green space of exceptional heritage significance, improving access for people of all abilities to experience and enjoy. Many years of decline – the site was once destined for a fate as a landfill site – will now be reversed with a comprehensive conservation management plan of its key heritage features and biodiversity.

The site was renamed in 2000 after urban conservation campaigner Joy Fifer worked tirelessly in the 1980's on the 'Save Our Bog' campaign to save the site from development and is now a Local Nature Reserve and Site of Importance for Nature Conservation. It is home to a rich diversity of habitats, including the bog itself, various dry woodlands and a high number of species including birds, invertebrates and small mammals. In addition, the site also has important cultural and archaeological significance including two Bronze Age burnt mounds with Scheduled Ancient Monument status, and a former mill pool dam, a pond and a former water mill.

The announcement coincides with this years' International Year of Biodiversity and will delight locals who use the area as part of a well loved wildlife corridor in South Birmingham running from Woodgate Valley to Kings Heath.

Katie Foster, Chair of the Heritage Lottery Fund West Midlands committee, said: "We are delighted to play a major part in safeguarding and improving an area beloved by so many people in the region - and connected with such a well known writer whose childhood heritage here influenced his writing now known worldwide. It is good to know how much pleasure Lottery players money will bring to so many people, whether that be through volunteering or simply enjoying the wonderful natural habitat that Moseley Bog offers."

Works will include hedgerow restoration, meadow management, and tree safety, as well as improvements to boardwalks, steps, pathways, and signage around the site. Opportunities will be available for volunteers to become involved in the project, and members of the Moseley Bog Conservation Group will play a key role. Interpretation at the site will also be improved, and a range of learning materials including resource packs and an outreach programme for schools and community groups, a website, and self guided MP3 tours, will be produced.

Neil Wyatt, Chief Executive of The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country, said: "On the day our application for funding went to the HLF I was here, and saw two buzzards circling low overhead – here in the heart of the city. This is a remarkable reserve on its own merit, yet this place means so much to so many people, in so many different ways. It inspired Tolkien, and it has inspired local people to stand up for their local greenspaces across the country. Now, finally, all the effort of the local community to protect and look after Moseley Bog and Joy's Wood will be rewarded. This is one of the UK's most important urban nature reserves, and we are so grateful for the support it is to receive."

Bob Blackham, leader of the volunteers of Moseley Bog, and widely recognised JR Tolkien expert, said: "Moseley Bog has been affected and changed by human activity for at least the last 3000 years as can be seen by the Bronze Age burnt mounds, the medieval earthworks of the dam and the remains of the Victorian/Edwardian gardens. Nature has

always repaired and restored the works of man but for the last 13 years the Bog has been helped by the Moseley Bog Volunteers, without whom this project would not be possible."

Roger Owen, Natural England's Regional Director for the West Midlands, said: "The Natural Assets programme, funded by Advantage West Midlands and delivered in partnership by Natural England, is pleased to be supporting the project at Moseley Bog and Joy's Wood. The site will be transformed into Tolkien's Nature Reserve becoming a high quality natural asset with access for all. The enhanced site will be a place for informal recreation, as well as practical volunteering involvement for the local community, an outdoor classroom for local schools and a tourist attraction bringing economic benefit to the region."

There will also be new initiatives to encourage first-time visitors to the nature reserve, in addition to the Tolkien Weekend and Dawn Chorus Day which are becoming very popular. A new open air performance and education space will be created, which it is hoped will become a hub for community events and courses.

Notes to editors

* The HLF grant to the project Moseley Bog – Tolkien's Nature Reserve is for £376,500 (69% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

Further history – Moseley Bog
Moseley Bog comprises wet and dry semi natural woodland with patches of fen vegetation on the site of an old mill pond and secondary woodland. The mill pond fed Sarehole Mill from the 16th century. From the mid 19th century the mill pond was left to nature and developed into the present habitat. From the late 19th century, urban development surrounded and encroached on the site, as evidenced by the remains of some Victorian gardens on the edge of the Bog. Most of the Bog and Joy's Wood, with the exception of the Victorian gardens, were purchased by Birmingham City Council in 1935.

Joy's Wood (The Dell) was used as a tip until the 1970s when it was capped and turned into playing fields. Moseley Bog is currently owned and managed by Birmingham City Council and was declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) by them in 1991.

Moseley Bog was the childhood playground of JRR Tolkien who lived on Wake Green Road adjacent to the site and it is thought the local area inspired his writing. A Tolkien Weekend is held every May attracting thousands of fans to Moseley Bog and Sarehole Mill.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has not only revitalised hundreds of museums, parks, historic buildings, landscapes and wildlife sites, but has also given new meaning to heritage itself. People from every walk of life are now involved with the heritage that inspires them, making choices about what they want to keep and share from the past, for future generations. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, including £319million to projects across the West Midlands region alone. To date, grants worth just under £59million have been awarded to 405 projects in Birmingham.

Natural England is the government's independent advisor on the natural environment. Established in 2006 their work is focused on enhancing England's wildlife and landscapes and maximising the benefits they bring to the public. They establish and care for England's main wildlife and geological sites, ensuring that over 4,000 National Nature Reserves and Sites of Special Scientific Interest are looked after and improved.

Natural England work to ensure that England's landscapes are effectively protected, designating England's National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Marine Conservation Zones, and advising widely on their conservation. They run England's Environmental Stewardship green farming schemes that deliver over £400 million a year to farmers and landowners, enabling them to enhance the natural environment across two thirds of England's farmland.

They fund, manage, and provide scientific expertise for hundreds of conservation projects each year, improving the prospects for thousands of England's species and habitats, and promote access to the wider countryside, helping establish National Trails and coastal trails and ensuring that the public can enjoy and benefit from them. www.naturalengland.org.uk/

Advantage West Midlands is the regional development agency (RDA) for the West Midlands, whose role it is to lead the West Midlands region towards greater economic prosperity. www.advantagewm.co.uk

Further information

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