Nine precious landscapes to be restored

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced grants totalling £21m to conserve nine distinctive landscapes. This investment will ensure a boost for rural areas and provide long-term social, economic and environmental benefits. The landscapes are:

- Coigach and Assynt, a beautiful and remote part of North West Scotland
- The New Forest, extensive ancient woodland and heathland with a strong surrounding community
- Humberhead Levels spanning Yorkshire and Lincolnshire, a rare internationally important wetland landscape characterised by significant remains of medieval strip farming and famous for its peatlands
- Ingleborough Dales, a limestone landscape in the Craven district of the Yorkshire Dales National Park
- North York Moors, home of the pioneering ironstone industry and the early development of railways
- Lough Neagh in Northern Ireland, the largest fresh water lake in the British Isles
- Rusland Valley and Fells, in the South Lake District National Park with a strong link to the traditional coppicing industry
- Derwent Valley, a coalfield area in North East England left behind by deindustrialisation which aims to harness the potential of its heritage for positive change and tourism
- East Wight, the eastern tip of the Isle of Wight and an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

HLF's Landscape Partnership (LP) programme – which has now been running for a decade – is the most significant grant scheme available for landscape-scale projects. To date, over £160m has been invested in 91 different areas across the UK helping forge new partnerships between public and community bodies and ensuring people are better equipped to understand and tackle the needs of their local landscapes.

Professor Sir John Lawton CBE FRS, eminent British ecologist and author of *Making Space for Nature: A Review of England's Wildlife Sites and Ecological Network*, added: "As a passionate advocate of landscape-scale conservation through habitat recreation and restoration, I am delighted to see HLF's continuing, visionary support for nine more Landscape Partnerships throughout the UK, for the benefits of people, landscapes and wildlife. And as an adopted Yorkshireman, I cannot help noticing, with considerable pride, that three of them are in the iconic landscapes of God's own county!"

Head of Landscape and Natural Heritage at HLF, Drew Bennellick, said: "HLF's landscape-scale funding has helped forge strong local partnerships which have secured the future of some of our most threatened landscapes.

"The nine schemes we are supporting this year have all demonstrated a need for urgent conservation work to the natural and built heritage as well as reconnecting communities to these places. They are important on many levels, including being an integral part of our health and well-being and a significant contributor to the tourist economy.

"The UK's amazing countryside is under ever-increasing pressure and we must act now to make sure it continues to be one of our greatest assets."

The successful LP schemes include:

Coigach and Assynt LP, Scotland – HLF grant of £3m, including £100,000 development funding
Coigach and Assynt is a dramatic, rugged landscape in the far north-west of Scotland. One of the remotest places in Europe, it is home to a small, close-knit community which gives it a strong sense of identity. The project, part of a wider 40-year vision, has been developed by a grassroots partnership led by the Scottish Wildlife Trust. It will restore parts of the landscape, including pathways, blanket bog and heath moor. It will also engage local people and visitors through a comprehensive volunteering programme and a cultural learning programme which will increase understanding of this vast area's complex heritage.

New Forest LP, Hampshire – HLF grant of £2.9m, including £161,000 development funding
The New Forest comprises extensive areas of woodland, wetlands and heath which are closely connected to the surrounding villages, small-holdings and farms. These links, formed over thousands of years thanks to a unique system of land management based on 'commoning' rights, are at risk of being weakened by 21st-century pressures. The New Forest National Park Authority and its partners are taking decisive action to restore and protect this beautiful part of South East England, not only through practical measures but also by developing a shared understanding and enthusiasm between 'commoners', landowners, the wider community and visitors to the New Forest.

Humberhead Levels LP, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire – HLF grant of £1.9m, including £77,500 development funding
The Levels include parts of North Lincolnshire, East and South Yorkshire. Set within a low-lying engineered and drained landscape (often referred to as 'English polders'), the partnership area includes both the UK's largest lowlands raised peat bog complex and its most extensive landscape survival. Rare birds, including breeding cranes and nightjars, thrive on the moors but the bogs are at risk of drying out and the medieval landscape is being lost. Running alongside conservation work will be opportunities for local people to take part in archaeological surveying, traditional ploughing, land stewardship skills and training.

Further information

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