Orchard project gets back to London’s core values

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Now, with the aid of a £50,000 grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) The London Orchard Project will be working with volunteers from across the capital to map the surviving trees and restore some of the sites to produce fruit for the future.

Ancient maps show orchards all round the capital with especially abundant fruit-growing beside the River Lea and in West London where large orchards were removed to make way for development. The Victorian gardener who first cultivated the Cox’s Orange Pippin is buried near the runways of Heathrow airport.

There are some 18 hectares of land throughout London where former orchards have been identified. Working with volunteers the project will be surveying the sites to assess their biodiversity value, condition and the fruit varieties to be found. They will also target sites for restoration work in the second half of the two-year project.

Some 150 Londoners will be trained up in orchard restoration and management and a further 200 in fruit tree maintenance at a series of skills workshops. A range of special events including traditional juicing and fruit preserving and even cider making workshops will be held along with special fruit exhibitions of native London varieties.

The project will be working during the coming year with volunteers from the boroughs of Sutton, Kingston and Brent amongst others, undertaking restoration work.

There are many street names that give a clue to where fruit trees were once found, such as Orchard Road, and as a follow-on from the HLF-funded project there are plans for planting new apple trees to grow traditional varieties once more in these locations.

Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London Sue Bowers said: “Traditional orchards are equally important for London’s biodiversity and its history. This project brings together both aspects and gives local communities quite literally a taste for their heritage.”

For the London Orchard Project Carina Millstone said: “We are very excited with our new ‘Rediscovering London’s Lost Orchard Heritage programme.’ Over the coming months, we will be calling on Londoners to help us identify and restore orchards in their local area, so drop us a line at heritage@thelondonorchardproject.org if you would like to be kept updated and get involved.”

Notes to editors

• Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.7billion across the UK, with £873 million of that in London.

Further information

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