Save our Stones

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Historical boundary stones are to be excavated and preserved for future generations thanks to an award of over £10,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF).

The project focuses on the area surrounding Dipton in Co. Durham and is led by the Pont Valley Network and supported by Groundwork in Durham. The project called ‘Save our Stones’ will remove and relocate Parish boundary stones that have become increasingly buried over time. They will be surveyed and moved to safer locations where they can be looked after and appreciated by all. The members of the Pont Valley Network have studied the heritage of the Pont Valley for many years and are passionate about retrieving the stones and securing their safety.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for the North East Region, Ivor Crowther, said: “These boundary stones are hugely important to the area, both historically and environmentally. They play a key role in shaping the Pont Valley landscape. It would be tragic if more of these beautiful stones are lost or covered which is why it is important to relocate them. It is vital that we conserve our landscapes so that future generations can appreciate them as we have.”

The locations of the boundary stones are included on the first Ordnance Survey map of 1856 and there are twelve of them in total. Dipton lay in the Parish of Lanchester. Parishes were often divided into small ‘Chapelries’, just as Manors were divided into townships. In Lanchester Parish, the Chapelries centred on Medomsley, Satley, Ebchester and Esh, but Dipton looked towards Lanchester itself as its Parish Church.

The enclosure of the Commons, and the growth of the coal trade, brought great changes in the number of people living locally and in where they lived. Around Pontop Pike the old hamlets were expanding by the early 1800’s, and it was a long way to walk to Lanchester Church. In 1841, therefore, a new Parish was carved out of the old Parish of Lanchester to serve the area between Annfield Plain in the south, and the Pont Burn in the north, and this Parish was named ‘Collierley’. In order to mark out the parish a number of dressed, carved boundary stones were positioned along the Northern boundary.

The Save Our Stones project will raise awareness of the history of the boundary stones and will engage the local community in the heritage of their area. Activity sessions, interpretation development and educational programmes will run throughout the project to involve people and invite them to learn about aspects of their industrial, social and natural heritage. There will be new opportunities for guided heritage walks along the stone trail so that a greater number of people will be able to see these magnificent stones.

Grace Wallace, from Groundwork, comments on the project: “We are thrilled to have been given the opportunity to save these boundary stones, and we’re hoping to get lots of local people involved through out the project to raise awareness of the heritage of the stones and what they mean to this beautiful area. Saving historic relics like this is going to be a huge asset to the Pont Valley area and we are looking forward to working with the local community to get the project underway.”

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) 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 more than 28,800 projects, allocating over £4.3billion across the UK, with over £208 million has granted in the North East alone.

Pont Valley Network, a community organisation working to benefit the area in and around the Pont Valley. The group is made up of a number of local people who voluntarily meet to develop projects in the area. Groundwork in Durham is assisting the group with project development and delivery.
www.pontvalley.net/
www.northeast.groundwork.org.uk/

Further information

Laura Bates, HLF Press Office on 0207 591 6027 or lbates@hlf.org.uk

Grace Wallace, Groundwork pn 01207 524803 or grace.wallace@groundwork.org.uk