

Solway Coast awarded nearly £2million for restoration of wetland sites

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The scheme, led by the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty unit working in partnership with Natural England, Environment Agency, RSPB, Cumbria Wildlife Trust, West Cumbria Tourism, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery Trust and the Diocese of Carlisle, will restore and conserve different parts of the natural and built heritage, including restoring 12 wetland areas and traditional North Cumberland hedges, to prevent continuing degradation of this precious landscape. Works will also improve access to the wetlands for visitors and those wishing to learn more about the landscape.

Covering the Solway Plain and the central portion of the Solway Coast Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), this area of north-west Cumbria is plentiful in historic, cultural and archaeological features. It includes nationally rare habitats such as lowland raised mires and a dense network of rivers, streams and ditches which together form a unique landscape important for migratory wildfowl, wading birds and other rare species of plants and animals.

The scheme will focus on creating a patchwork of restored wetland sites that will link the main areas and provide habitat corridors for wildlife. As part of this a new Solway Plains Cultural Heritage Centre will be created at Holme Cultram Abbey, and a Solway Wetland Centre at RSPB North Plain.

Other projects include reintroduction of the marsh fritillary butterfly into the area, a community fund for community led projects and archaeological research focussing on the Cistercian monks' legacy in the project area. There will be many opportunities for people to be involved to make this project a success.

Alex Kaars Sijpesteijn, the Development Officer for the project says: "We are delighted to have been awarded this grant. It will be a great opportunity for the Solway Plain and this valuable landscape to be put on the map and for people to experience how special it is."

The award has been made through the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme, which helps conserve areas of distinctive landscape character and supports partnerships that provide long-term social, economic and environmental benefits for rural areas.

Over the past seven years, the HLF Landscape Partnership Scheme has helped protect spectacular scenery in 56 different parts of the UK. With this investment of £90m, key partnerships have been forged between public and community bodies enabling people to tackle the needs of their local landscapes in a co-ordinated and practical way.

Notes to editors

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.