Trees for Life

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The funding will enable volunteers from diverse backgrounds, including older people and those who are unemployed or on low incomes, to help directly in the restoration of Scotland's ancient Caledonian Forest in stunning locations such as Glen Affric and Glen Moriston.

Volunteers, who otherwise might not get the chance to do so, will be able to take practical action to protect the natural environment, learn about threatened habitats and species, and benefit from time spent in green places and activities that are good for mental and physical health.

Alan Watson Featherstone, Trees for Life's Executive Director, said: "This Heritage Lottery Fund grant is great news for the Caledonian Forest and for local communities, as it will allow disadvantaged volunteers to help save Scotland's equivalent of a rainforest and its unique wildlife. By doing so, they will develop new skills and gain a rewarding experience from spending time outdoors in the inspirational wild landscapes of the Highlands."

Colin McLean, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Scotland, said: "In what is the Year of Natural Scotland, this is a great opportunity for people, who would not normally have the chance, to visit the countryside to learn new skills and gain a better understanding of our natural environment. By encouraging more people to experience nature first-hand, hopefully we are inspiring their enthusiasm for its long-term conservation while having fun along the way."

Activities will include hands on conservation work in breathtaking locations surrounded by mountains, forest and rivers – including tree planting and protection, and work in Trees for Life's tree nursery at its acclaimed Dundreggan Estate, a biodiversity hotspot situated to the west of Loch Ness.

Although only a fraction of the former Caledonian Forest now survives, Trees for Life volunteers have helped to plant more than one million trees at dozens of locations, and to create 10,000 acres of new forest. The award-winning charity is restoring the forest to a spectacular wilderness region of 1,000 square miles in the Highlands to the west of Loch Ness and Inverness.

Notes to editors

Since planting its first trees in 1991 in Glen Affric, Trees for Life has planted over one million trees and has created 10,000 acres of new Caledonian Forest. Its awards include 1991 UK Conservation Project of the Year, Millennium Marque in 2000, Top 10 Conservation Holidays worldwide in 2009, and 2012 Glenfiddich Spirit of Scotland Environment Award.

People can support Trees for Life by funding dedicated trees and groves, while the charity's Conservation Weeks allow people to gain practical conservation experience in beautiful locations.

Further information

For more details, view Trees for Life's website or call 0845 458 3505.