# Volunteers wanted for nature reserve re-vamp

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The three-year project will enable the Hodge Lane Conservation Group to build on work undertaken by volunteers during the past six years to restore and protect the various habitats to be found in the 4.5 hectare natural oasis between the Coventry Canal and the Mercian Way at Amington. Expert surveys will be carried out and a future management plan drawn up. Volunteers will receive training in a range of environmental skills.

The reserve occupies the site of a 19th-century brickworks that used to feature a narrow gauge railway to transport the bricks. It now comprises a rare patch of oak woodland, ponds and areas of scrub and open grass all of which will be improved by volunteers during the 'Hodge Lane Goes Wet ‘n’ Wild' project.

Another dimension to the project will be research to discover the heritage of the site and surrounding area. This will involve recorded interviews with local people to create both oral and written accounts for future generations. Some of the work will be undertaken by young people who will have the chance to interview older members of the community as a result.

Beginning in the International Year of Biodiversity 2010, the project will enable volunteers to enhance existing habitats by breaking up some of the compacted ground around the former brickworks site, clearing nettles and brambles, planting a range of woodland wild flowers and aquatic species to improve the existing large pond that currently dries up during summer months.

Because of its importance as green space for the local community the Conservation Group hopes as many volunteers as possible will come forward to take part in the project, both for the hands-on environmental work and the historical research. The Group will also be working with Staffordshire Wildlife Trust’s community and education team and local schools to deliver environmental learning sessions.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Anne Jenkins, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “This reserve provides an oasis for wildlife as well as the local community. The project will ensure it not only continues to fulfil this vital role, but is able to make an even greater impact on the locality.”

For the Hodge Lane Conservation Group, John Wells, said: “This work will consolidate the conservation work of volunteers over the last six years and provide a lasting reminder for future generations of this important local site.”

New volunteers should contact Diane Wells 01827 703820 or dianekeenewells@hotmail.com

**Notes to Editors**

Using money raised through the National Lottery, since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has not only revitalised hundreds of museums, parks, historic buildings, landscapes and wildlife sites, but has also given new meaning to heritage itself. People from every walk of life are now involved with the heritage that inspires them, making choices about what they want to keep and share from the past, for future generations. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, including £317million to projects in the West Midlands region alone.

**Further information**

HLF Press Office: Vicky Wilford on 020 7591 6046 / 07973 401937 / vickyw@hlf.org.uk or Phil Cooper on 07889 949 173.

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