Saltscape secures Heritage Lottery Fund



Cheshire's salt deposits have been used since Roman times

Over the next three years the project aims to conserve and restore important features connected to the area's landscape, increase awareness and appreciation of the special qualities of this unique area, promote new opportunities for people to access, enjoy and learn about the salt heritage of the area, and develop training programmes for the local community to develop their heritage skills.

There will be many opportunities for people to get involved in and find out more about the salt landscape in and around Northwich, Winsford, Frodsham and Middlewich through essential conservation work to create habitats and remove invasive species, built and natural environment education visits and sessions for children and adults, conferences and events and talks, performances, history and archaeology and geology projects, recording and social media projects and the restoration of some of the key features in the area such as the Anderton Boatlift Gate Lodges, Swing bridge at Vale Royal Locks and pathways throughout the area.

The provision of training courses will be key to the success of this project. A number of partner organisations will be providing opportunities for trainees looking for a career in the heritage and conservation fields to learn new skills.

The geology of this part of Cheshire resulted in large salt deposits in the area, which have been used since Roman times. Through the centuries the salt has been exploited as a valuable resource, leading to the establishment of

hundreds of small enterprises, new settlements, multinational businesses, a canal network, groundbreaking engineering feats and ingenuity and ultimately natural habitats that are rarely found inland. The salt still provides jobs for many people in the area and the legacy of the salt industry also provides further education, leisure and tourism opportunities.

Dave Blackburn, Chair of the Saltscape Partnership, said: “This project aims to protect, restore, enhance and manage this special area as one environment, to rebuild local people’s relationship with their land, heritage and history and strive to make the area a better place to work, live and visit. Using the knowledge and vision of a wide range of local people and organisations, the Saltscape partnership has developed a range of projects which will bring to life this fascinating story and help to conserve and improve access to many of the features in the area. We are extremely pleased that the Heritage Lottery Fund share our enthusiasm and are supporting us with this generous grant.”

Explaining the importance of the HLF support, Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: “Our Landscape Partnership Schemes bring together community groups and public bodies with a shared passion for caring for our incredible natural environment. Our investment in the Saltscape Partnership brings cohesion to the unique natural and built heritage of this part of Cheshire, and will enable its sights and stories to be shared and appreciated by more and more people.”

Notes to editors

About Groundwork Cheshire
Groundwork Cheshire helps people and businesses make changes in order to create better neighbourhoods, to build skills and job prospects, and to live and work in a greener way. We know that the important issues are all connected – so our work can’t easily be placed in boxes marked 'environmental issues’, 'regeneration', 'employment' or 'health'. We manage projects and services that benefit both people and the wider environment.

We operate across Cheshire, Halton, Warrington & Wirral and work on dozens of individual projects each year. We focus our activity on disadvantaged communities where we can make most difference. Whether it’s helping to give local people a voice in decision making, involving young people in local regeneration projects, tackling climate change or supporting economic development by breathing life into industrial estates, the experience we bring and our ability to innovate has meant that our work makes a real difference on the ground. Groundwork Cheshire really does make things happen. Visit the Groundwork Cheshire website for more information.

About Saltscape and the Partnership
Saltscape is a unique landscape carved out of the solid geology of the Cheshire Plain, taking in the estuarine land north of Frodsham, stretching south to the towns of Winsford and the Roman remains at Middlewich, and down to the heartland of the industrialised town of Northwich. Saltscape tells a story of economic and landscape change, brought by the presence underground of salt, telling the human story of the people who shaped the land and worked, in harsh conditions, to exploit the rich mineral source.

The presence of salt has affected and shaped the natural world of the landscape, with many specialist habitats and creatures and gives a wealth of opportunity for local people to explore and discover a living landscape unique to the scheme area.

With a host of honeypot sites and disconnected features the Saltscape Landscape Partnership Scheme strives to develop a coherent whole and to raise awareness and aspiration.

It seeks to secure the legacy of the past, by developing the skills of current communities and enhancing key attractions and the landscape as a whole to become a much loved, appreciated and nurtured place.

The partnership has been developing plans for this scheme for over 4 years. In addition to Groundwork Cheshire the steering group consists of the following organisations:

- Canal & River Trust
- Cheshire Wildlife Trust
- Cheshire West & Chester Council
- Middlewich Town Council
- Saltscape Community Forum
- The Mersey Forest
- The Weaver Valley Partnership
- Weaverham Trust

They have been working alongside a range of other groups to develop a landscape character assessment and action plans for the next three years, and will continue to work together to see the plans come to fruition.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews, please contact Peter Heberlet, Director of Sustainable Communities at Groundwork Cheshire, on 01606 723160 or peter.heberlet@groundworkcheshire.org.uk.