Tees Valley Wildlife Trust wins Heritage Lottery



Long-eared brown bat Hugh Clark/Bat Conservation Trust

The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust has received a confirmed grant of £45,300 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) and a further £5,000 funding from Northumbrian Water's Branch Out Fund for the East Cleveland Batscape Project.

The two-year project aims to increase appreciation and understanding of the number of different bats in East Cleveland and how they are using the landscape to roost, forage and commute. The wooded nature of East Cleveland and the rural character of the landscape give it the potential to be important for more than eight species of bats including some of the rarer bats. The project will work with local communities and volunteers to provide training in field skills and the use of detectors to record and care for this unique wildlife.

There will also be a wealth of opportunities for people of all ages to encounter, enjoy, learn and appreciate bats through programmes of walks, talks, specific bat events, and primary school visits. By providing a unique wildlife encounter combined with fun, educational and interactive activities people will be helped to:

- develop positive attitudes to bats
- appreciate their ecological importance
- contribute to their conservation.

Training programmes will provide volunteers with skills in wildlife recording and the ability to discover more about the bats in their neighbourhood and how they use the landscape to move about. The formation of an East Cleveland Bat Group will help in future monitoring and conservation work.

Jeremy Garside, Chief Executive of Tees Valley Wildlife Trust, says: “We are delighted to receive support for this wildlife project. With the help of East Cleveland communities we are going to significantly improve our understanding not only of the presence and distribution of various species of bat, required for their long term conservation, but how bats are using the landscape to roost, commute and forage to inform wider wildlife management at a Living Landscape scale.”

Ivor Crowther, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North East, said: “Whilst not always considered to be the cutest of animals, bats are a vital part of our ecosystem and their declining numbers flag up an urgent need to understand them better and share that knowledge with local communities in order to protect them. We’re sure the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust project will be a great success and the long-term conservation of bats and their habitats in East Cleveland will be much improved.”

Northumbrian Water’s Branch Out fund helps to deliver projects that benefit the natural environment and local communities. It aims to help build resilience and adapt to the changing climate whilst bringing benefits to water, wildlife and communities
“We are really pleased to be supporting the East Cleveland Bats Project because of the way it will engage local people with this enigmatic mammal and give valuable information which will help protect bats and their habitats.” – Stuart Pudney Conservation & Land manager, Northumbrian Water Group.

To register your interest in the project go to Tees Wildlife Trust's East Cleveland Batscape page.

Notes to editors

- There are 18 species of bat in the UK, 17 of which are known to be breeding here - that's almost a quarter of our mammal species
- There are at least eight species of bats present and breeding in the North East and occasional records of other species of bat
- Bat populations have suffered severe declines during the past century. Due to low reproductive rates recovery will be slow
- The East Cleveland batscape is poorly understood due to historic low survey levels
- All bats and their roosts are protected by law
- More information on bats can be found on the Bat Conservation Trust Website.

About the Tees Valley Wildlife Trust

The Tees Valley Wildlife Trust is part of the influential UK-wide partnership of 47 wildlife trusts. The trust has worked for more than 30 years to protect wildlife and wild places, and educate, influence and empower people. They manage 14 nature reserves and help others to manage their countryside sites. Their work is helping to secure the future of many important habitats and species, which might otherwise be lost. More information can be found at the Tees Wildlife Trust website.

About the Northumbrian Water Branch Out Fund

The Branch Out fund exists to help people deliver projects that benefit the natural environment and their local communities. It is about working in partnership to reconnect habitats for the benefit of people and wildlife.

Further information

For further information, images and interviews please contact: Kate Bartram, East Cleveland Development Officer, Tees Valley Wildlife Trust on 01287 636 382 (Tuesday to Thursday), email: kbartram@teeswildlife.org.

Attached is a photograph of a brown long eared bat. If you use this photograph it must clearly be credited to Hugh Clark/Bat Conservation Trust.