

CWT staff and volunteers Tom Marshall

If you have ever wanted to help save and protect the wildlife right on your doorstep there has never been a better time as Cheshire Wildlife Trust announces its ground-breaking new volunteer programme, Natural Futures.

Thanks to a Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) grant, over the next four years the trust is making a £1.2million investment in volunteering that will not only change the face of the trust, but will also shape the county's wildlife and natural spaces for the better.

Ambitious in scale, the project's aim is actually very simple – let's get more people doing more for nature in Cheshire.

Natural Futures will fund a dedicated project officer and two volunteer co-ordinators, who will give additional support and training to the trust's existing volunteers, and will bring together new volunteers who can lend a hand on current work and future projects.

In return volunteers will benefit from learning new skills, being part of a vibrant network and improving their health and well-being. The project will also bring together local community conservation groups, providing them with skills and support to run effectively.

The project targets four main volunteer areas:

- Local conservation groups

- Young people (under-25s)
- Volunteering for leisure
- People in recovery from physical or mental illness.

Martin Varley, Director of Conservation, said: “Cheshire Wildlife Trust has been working in nature conservation for more than 50 years, but we can’t confront the challenges facing Cheshire on our own.

“The key to unlocking the solution to the present threat to nature in Cheshire is to mobilise more people who share our concern. Natural Futures will help to reach new audiences and build on our foundation to make a sustainable difference for nature.”

Paul Taylor, Countryside Ranger for Cheshire West and Chester Council, said: “We are delighted to be working in partnership with Cheshire Wildlife Trust. Volunteering your time is a great way to help wildlife on your doorstep and this project will help us manage important nature conservation sites across the Cheshire West and Chester area.”

Hilary Ash, from the trust’s local group, Wirral Wildlife, said: “We have a good volunteer group in Wirral, but always need more hands and more skills to help local wildlife. This project is very good news, as it will interest more people in wildlife and offer the chance to develop new skills for both existing and new volunteers."

Councillor Martin Candler, Stockport Council’s Executive Member for Communities and Sustainability, said: “Stockport Council welcomes this announcement by the Cheshire Wildlife Trust, and we hope that the many volunteers who currently work in the borough’s green spaces will be able to benefit from this initiative.”

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “This engaging project will actively involve the local community as they gain the skills and enthusiasm that are vital for the future custodians of Cheshire’s natural heritage. The volunteers will not only have fun in learning about the county’s impressive wildlife and natural spaces, they’ll play an important role in shaping how we all work together to safeguard it for the future.”

Further information

For further information, contact Gemma Sproston, Communications Officer, Cheshire Wildlife Trust at g.sproston@cheshirewt.org.uk or on 01948 822 226.