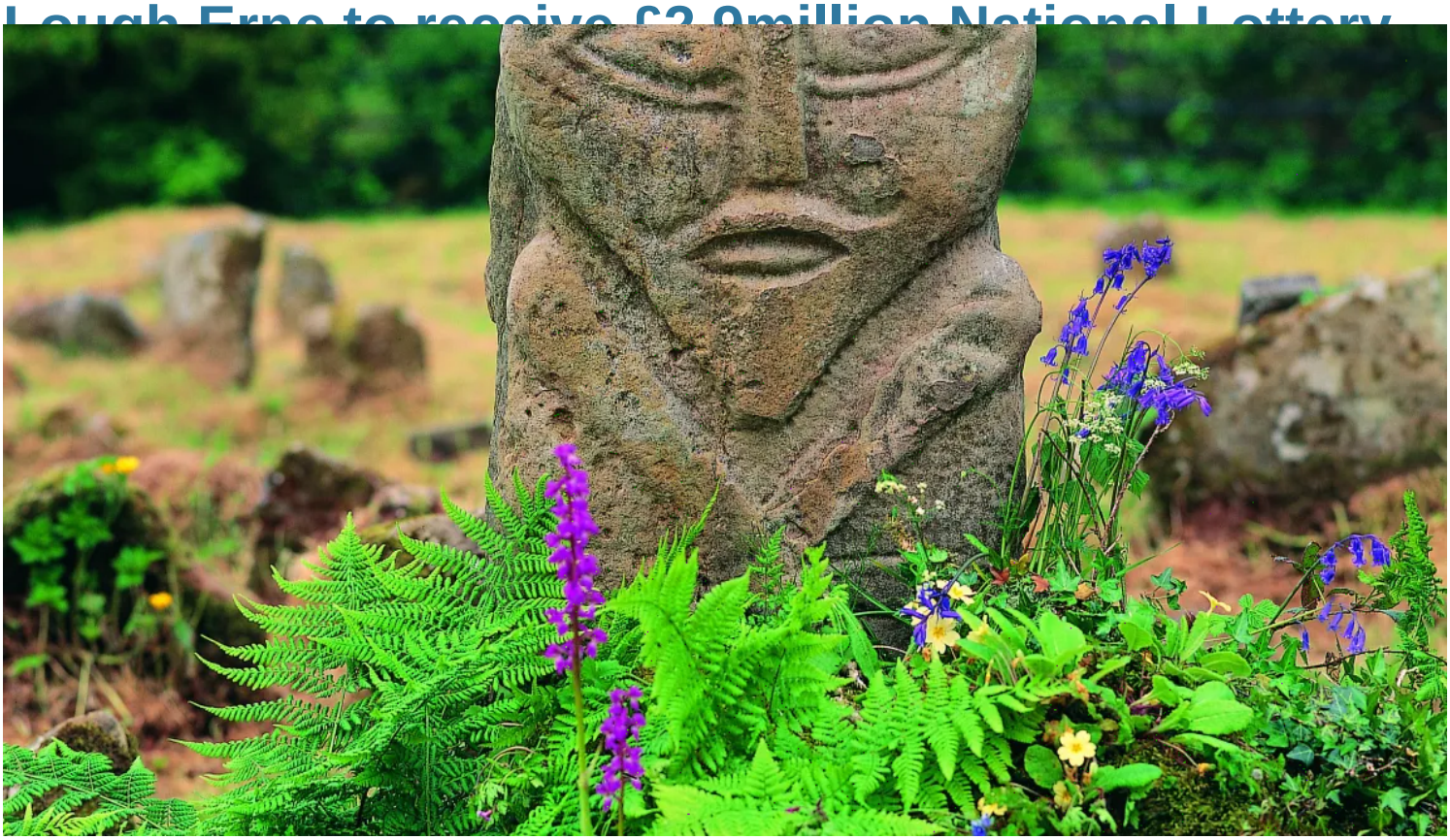
Lough Erne to receive £2.9million National Lottery



Carved stone figure on Boa Island Fermanagh and Omagh DC

Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has granted over £2.9million to preserve and enhance one of Northern Ireland's greatest natural treasures, Lough Erne, Co Fermanagh.

The money is to go to the Lough Erne Landscape Partnership which is led by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB). It will be used to conserve at risk heritage buildings; to preserve and improve wildlife species and their habitats and to better manage a 500 square kilometre area of Fermanagh's famous Lakelands.

Local communities around the lough will be encouraged to get involve in the project which will also improve access to the Erne – often known as Northern Ireland's Lake District - to the benefit of locals and visitors.

Up to 400 hundred local people will receive training in traditional skills such as thatching, ironmongery, stone work and boat building. There will also be training in oral history techniques so that they can tell the stories of the heritage and wildlife of this unique place.

A total of 200 local volunteers will also work on the project.

New paths, bird hides and camp sites will be provided to provide better access to the lough and there will be festivals, exploring days and events to celebrate the beauty of the landscape and its extraordinary history.

The area has more than 100 scheduled monuments spanning 900 years of human history. Many of these are neglected, in serious disrepair and all but forgotten. The project will protect and preserve them, including some of the region's iconic thatched cottages.

The area is also an important breeding ground for wading birds such as curlew, snipe and lapwing whose populations have seen a catastrophic decrease of 83% in the past 30 years. This problem will be addressed by better land management and tackling invasive species which devastate native plant and animal life. As part of this ancient woodlands and hedgerows will be restored and maintained.

Paul Mullan, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, said: "Thanks to the National Lottery players we are able to support this vital programme. To date we have invested £37.5million in Northern Ireland on landscape and biodiversity programmes and this is one of the most exciting to date.

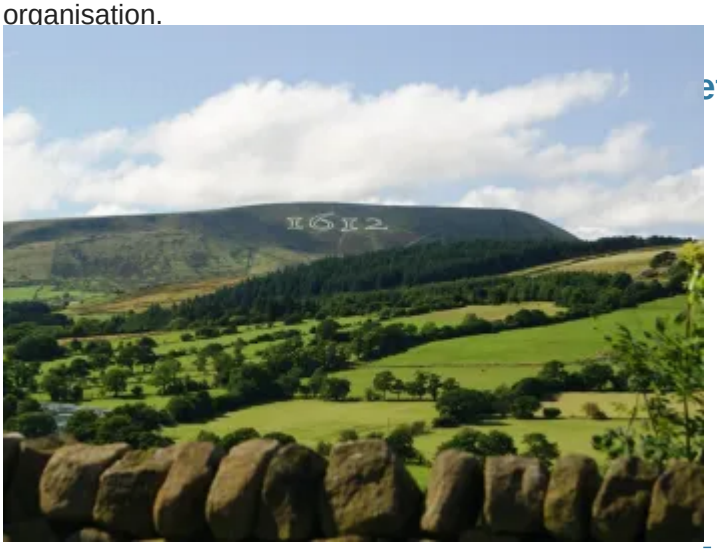
"We believe that it will make a huge contribution to preserving a unique place which is full of history, helping local people reconnect to the beauty on their doorsteps and encourage more visitors. It will also grow the local economy in a rural area by reintroducing traditional crafts and increasing tourism."

Joanne Sherwood from RSPB NI which is leading the project said: "All the partners involved in this project are delighted that we have been successful in obtaining this funding to help preserve, protect and enhance one of Northern Ireland's most beautiful places. This funding will help create jobs and leave a lasting legacy for the people of Fermanagh.

"The landscape around Lough Erne is so special, and everyone involved in the project is looking forward to working together to make it an even more wonderful place for people and wildlife.

The other partners involved in the project are Waterways Ireland, Fermanagh and Omagh District Council, Fermanagh Rural Community Network, the Ulster Architectural Heritage Society and the Upper Lough Erne Region community organisation.

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Part of Pendle Hill carved with 1612 Alastair Lee

Double, double, toil and trouble: Halloween funding boost for home of Pendle Witches!