

Funding will help restore over 540 hectares of neglected landscape and habitat, once known as the Alps of Glamorgan.

The Lost Peatlands of South Wales project is aiming to restore a historic peatland landscape and to help people enjoy their local outdoor space.

The project has been awarded £260,000 by The National Lottery to develop its plans further. It can then apply for a larger grant of over £1.8million once its plans are fully developed.



Flourishing heathland. Credit: NPTC

This grant is the first major award given in The National Lottery Heritage Fund's new focus areas of Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf, which have been identified as the two areas in Wales that could benefit most from National Lottery investment in their heritage.

A changed landscape

Once referred to as the Alps of Glamorgan, the uplands area between Neath Port Talbot and Rhondda Cynon Taf in the South Wales valleys was at one time boggy peatland. But due to the extensive commercial forestry planting of conifer trees since the 1950s, the area's landscape now looks very different.

This change has affected not only the look of the valleys, but other important natural elements such as the ability of rare wildlife to thrive there, as well as increased risk of fires and floods.

The use of land for forestry has also meant large areas are difficult to access for recreational use, meaning that local people don't see the benefit of this extensive green space.

A new start for nature and people

The project hopes to restore over 540 hectares of historic landscape and habitat, including:

- peat bogs and pools
- heathland
- grassland
- native woodland

And because blanket bog is rare across the world, the project will have a major international impact.



Black bog in Glyncorrwg. Credit: NPTC

As well as the landscape benefiting from the changes, many animal species that are currently declining in the area will be able to prosper once again. This includes birds like the skylark, cuckoo and nightjar as well as invertebrates such as the dark green fritillary and small pearl bordered fritillary butterflies. Water voles are also known to live in the vicinity.

As part of the project, local schools will ‘adopt’ one of these species, enabling pupils to learn about the endangered animals on their doorstep and how to help protect them.



Craft activities. Credit: NPTC

Local people will also be able to learn about the heritage on their doorstep through a range of activities, ranging from traditional skills like hedge-laying and dry stone walling to craft and activity programmes for local schools. A special classroom will be built using traditional techniques at the site so people can get hands on with nature.

Guided footpaths, new view points and signs will be created so the area is opened up and can be enjoyed by everyone.

Got an idea for a project?

If you have an idea for a heritage project based in Neath Port Talbot or Rhondda Cynon Taf, please get in touch with The National Lottery Heritage Fund team in Wales via email: wales@heritagefund.org.uk.