RSPB NI set to reopen nature reserves thanks to



Photo credit: Stephen Maxwell

Thanks to a grant of £214,900, RSPB Northern Ireland can safely reopen some visitor facilities and connect people with the nature on their doorstep.

The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is the biggest nature conservation organisation in Europe and has been operating in Northern Ireland for over fifty years.

With 11,000 members, 90 staff and 280 volunteers, RSPB NI plays a central role in giving nature a home in Northern Ireland – working to restore and protect diverse landscapes and giving people the opportunity to get closer to the nature on their doorstep.

A lifeline for nature



Curlew at RSPB NI. Photo credit: Stephen Maxwell

> “We’re grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for helping us reopen our reserves and protect nature at a time when we need it more than ever.”
>
> *Joanne Sherwood, RSPB NI Director*

When the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic struck, some of their work came to a halt. Visitor operations on nature reserves closed, many frontline staff (including wardens and estate workers) were furloughed, and new projects were put on hold.

RSPB NI applied for our Heritage Emergency Fund, and successfully secured a grant of £214,900 to help them survive the crisis and get back to caring for nature in Northern Ireland.

Reconnecting with wildlife



Joanne Sherwood, RSPB NI Director

Emergency funding will mean that some of the charity's nature reserves can now start to safely re-open. With thousands of visitors a year, these nature reserves are a crucial element of the charity's conservation work, and a place where the public can connect with nature.

Funds will help RSPB NI to bring back staff from furlough and implement new safety measures, including deep cleans, PPE equipment, signage and screens.

Joanne Sherwood, RSPB NI Director, said: "We're grateful to The National Lottery Heritage Fund and National Lottery players for helping us reopen our reserves and protect nature at a time when we need it more than ever."

The charity has already opened the outside spaces of reserves at Belfast's Window on Wildlife and Portmore Lough, and in the coming months, look forward to welcoming visitors back to indoor spaces.

Rachele Crawford, Visitor Experience Manager at Belfast Window on Wildlife, said; "We're delighted that we will soon be able to welcome back visitors to the visitor centre at Window on Wildlife in Belfast. Lockdown has helped people appreciate nature more than ever before, and it will be fantastic to be able to provide access for people to enjoy the wildlife on our doorstep."

Bringing nature to you



RSPB NI Window on Wildlife. Photo credit: Stephen Maxwell

With uncertainty over what the next few months hold, RSPB NI is developing new digital programmes and creating new ways for the public to connect with nature, right from the comfort of their home.

Funds will be used to purchase new camera equipment, including nest cams to enable the charity to live stream from their reserves and share videos on social media.