

Despite a biting wind and near freezing temperatures, the Bempton Cliffs team dug out their Hawaiian shirts to welcome their latest recruit, Barbados-born Ryan Chenery, as the reserve's new Volunteer Development Officer.

Keith Clarkson, Bempton Cliffs Site Manager, explained that Ryan's appointment is part of the on-going investment in the reserve: "Thanks to a grant from the Heritage Lottery Fund, we're able to make the reserve an even more special place to visit, and Ryan's appointment is just the start of this. His role will help us put our future plans into action by growing the team of volunteers that works alongside staff. Over the next few months we'll be making further appointments in readiness for our new visitor centre opening in spring 2015."

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) awarded £639,700 to Bempton Cliffs to revamp and improve its visitor offer to provide people with the opportunity of experiencing the UK's largest and most accessible, mainland seabird colony. As well as being able to employ additional staff, such as Ryan, the reserve will also use the grant to greatly improve facilities for visitors to the site.

Ryan brings with him a wealth of experience in the environmental sector including surveying habitats and species in Ecuador. He has also spent time volunteering in his native Barbados, as well as supporting a programme to reintroduce the red-billed curassow at a nature reserve along Brazil's Atlantic coastline.

With responsibility for developing the reserve's volunteer team, his knowledge and passion will be key to encouraging more people to give their time to help the charity in its work.

Ryan said: “Our current group of volunteers is terrific and they take on a variety of roles around the reserve – from cutting back grass to helping deliver events to working with schools. By bringing more people on board we’ll be able extend our activity in all these areas. I’m delighted to be joining such an amazing place at this exciting time.”

The only drawback for Ryan is the weather. He added: “Back home it’s probably around 25 or 26 degrees, compared to five or six degrees here. I need a lot more woolly jumpers.”

The RSPB currently has around 18,000 volunteers who are at the heart of everything the organisation does.

For younger people, it’s a great way of getting a foot in the door towards a career in conservation, while it can give others an opportunity to do something different from their day-to-day job or provide people with the chance to put their skills to good use once they’ve retired.

If you would like to know more about volunteering with the RSPB at Bempton Cliffs, on the reserve, in the office or on our seabird cruises, Ryan can be contacted on 01262 851 533 or at ryan.chenery@rspb.org.uk.

Notes to editors

The RSPB is the UK’s largest nature conservation charity, inspiring everyone to give nature a home. Together with their partners, they protect threatened birds and wildlife so our towns, coast and countryside will teem with life once again. Theyplay a leading role in BirdLife International, a worldwide partnership of nature conservation organisations.The Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB) is a registered charity: England and Wales no. 207076, Scotland no. SC037654.

The Bempton Cliffs redevelopment project has also been supported by Coast, Wolds, Wetlands and Waterways LEADER, through the Rural Development Programme for England (RDPE), jointly funded by Defra and the EU.

Further information

Ryan Chenery, RSPB Volunteer Development Officer, on 01262 851 533 or email: ryan.chenery@rspb.org.uk.
Liz Armitage, Regional Communications Manager, on 01484 868 419 / 07711 390 074 or email: liz.hirst@rspb.org.uk.