Beach volunteers to help rescue Hayling’s habitat

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The Sinah Common Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) at Hayling Island will have its fragile ecosystem improved and conserved in a project that mobilises the local community, under the guidance of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers (BTCV).

At the mouth of Langstone Harbour, Sinah Common is a 242-hectare stretch of maritime habitats including sand dunes, shingle beach, grassland and saltmarsh. The SSSI is officially described as being in an unfavourable condition but recovering.

Aiming to aid that recovery, BTCV’s Hayling Island Beach Wardens project will recruit helpers to manage and care for the coastline, take part in biodiversity monitoring and survey schemes, help make physical improvements and create a local community conservation group.

For the Heritage Lottery Fund, Head of HLF South East England Stuart McLeod, said: “This project is especially significant as, not only is 2010 the International Year of Biodiversity, but Havant is a priority area for the HLF in this region. The work now planned will inspire the local community to become actively engaged in the protection of this important natural asset.”

A similar beach warden scheme has already been set up successfully by BTCV on the Hamble Common SSSI in Eastleigh, and along the West Sussex coast. BTCV also helps to run the Havant Conservation Forum.

Apart from the diversity of its habitats, the Sinah site was designated a SSSI as it is thought to be one of just two sites in Britain that is home to an endangered plant species, the Chidling Pink (Petrorhagia nauteuilii). It also has an “outstanding assemblage of nationally scarce plants.”

For BTCV, Paul Forrest-Jameson (South East England (West & Central Counties) Area Manager) said: “Sinah Common is a very special place and we’re delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has agreed to enable BTCV to extend its Beach Warden programme to the Island, so that we can help local people to get more fully involved in the Common’s care and future protection."

The project is also being supported by Havant Borough Council.

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported more than 33,900 projects, allocating over £4.4billion across the UK, with over £428 million granted in the South East alone.

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