Bretton’s woods to be opened up to public thanks to Lottery grant

12/12/2012

The project, Forest for Peterborough - Woodland Heritage in Action, is to be run by Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) in partnership with Peterborough City Council and will see the 23.3 hectare semi-natural ancient urban woodland restored and made fully accessible for the first time in over 75 years. The site, which is made up of Grimeshaw Woods, Pocock’s Wood, and Highlees Spinney, is home to many rare species most notably the greater butterfly orchid as well as a wealth of veteran oaks, ground flora, bats, birds, invertebrates and fungi.

Robyn Llewellyn, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East of England, said: “Forest for Peterborough is an exciting initiative that will enable local people and volunteers to have a key role in managing their local woodland. The HLF grant will open up areas currently closed to the public and make others – often only frequented by the hardiest of dog walkers - far more accessible and enjoyable to use for everyone than they have been for many years.”

Over 100 volunteers are expected to become involved in the three year project, which aims to protect and connect people with the natural and cultural heritage of Bretton’s ancient woods. Activities will focus on three key themes – conservation, heritage skills, and woodland history and will include:

- Regular open days for local people to learn traditional woodland management skills such as path laying, bramble clearing, planting and coppicing
- Opportunities for families to take part in bird and bat box building events, conservation walks and surveying species
- Activities teaching people traditional heritage craft skills such as how to make tools and products from coppiced poles, how to willow weave and make baskets, and courses on furniture making

Bretton's woods contain evidence of having been managed as woodland for over 500 years, passing in ownership from the monastic Milton Estate, to the Peterborough Development Corporation and finally Peterborough City Council in recent times. This project will see PECT working in partnership with Peterborough Conservation Volunteers, Community Payback, and Job Deal to provide volunteering opportunities and training, while Cambridgeshire Pole Lathe Turners and Woodworkers group will connect local craftsmen and provide a forum for reaching a wider audience for activities offered.

Joseph Durant from PECT said: “Getting the wider community involved in the management of Bretton’s woods is essential for guaranteeing the long term sustainability of this incredible natural and cultural heritage asset. With the support of HLF and Peterborough City Council we will be able to return this historic royal woodland to the jewel in the crown of Bretton’s green spaces.”

Notes to editors

The HLF grant to the project Forest for Peterborough – Woodland Heritage in Action is for £225,700 (55% of project costs) and is a second-round pass, which means it is a confirmed award.

Peterborough Environment City Trust (PECT) is an independent charity working for a cleaner, greener, healthier Peterborough, delivering a range of projects working with local people, communities, schools, businesses, local authorities and voluntary organisations. For more information please see PECT website.

Further information

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