Cherish Eden project secures Lottery investment

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The £2.5million project aims to encourage local people and visitors to enjoy, cherish, and defend the River Eden in Cumbria. The application was made by the Trust in partnership with a range of other local organisations and work on the project will start straight away.

Cherish Eden is a five year plan to help local communities look after their local river, provide an apprenticeship scheme for Cumbrian youngsters, create a series of new walks and cycle rides in the Eden Valley, and establish a media project about the River Eden.

The River Eden and its tributaries in north Cumbria are of national and international importance for their wildlife. They are also of major economic importance to the area, providing drinking water, supporting agriculture and drawing locals and tourists alike to visit and undertake recreational activities. They form a significant part of the landscape and beauty of the Eden Valley.

The first part of the project aims to get local people actively involved in looking after the river where they live. Examples of activities include removing invasive plants, surveying river wildlife, helping to prevent pollution, protecting river banks and planting trees. It will be the community groups and volunteers who make a real difference, supported by Eden Rivers Trust, the Environment Agency and the Cumbria Freshwater Non-native Species Initiative. Those involved will enhance their environment, learn new skills and improve their own health and well-being. Other organisations with these objectives will also be involved.

The apprenticeship scheme is aimed at teaching young people about rivers and their importance to man and the environment. It will enable them to pursue careers in river conservation or other related subjects. The core teaching will be provided by Newton Rigg College – part of Askham Bryan College – in a partnership project with Eden Rivers Trust and other neighbouring rivers trusts.

Several new walks and cycle rides associated with the River Eden will be established as part of the project. These will create some beautiful new ways of exploring the Eden Valley countryside. They will also tell people about its violent, historical invaders as well as its less violent, but still dangerous invaders of today - invasive animals and plants which are threatening our wildlife! The walks and cycle rides will enable individuals, families, groups and schools to learn more about their local environment whilst enjoying the outdoors. Eden Rivers Trust and Cumbria County Council Environment Team will be involved in the first instance, along with the Environment Agency and the Cumbria Freshwater Non-native Species Initiative.

A media project will consider all the activities associated with the river and come up with fresh, modern ways of telling people about them. Local people will be able to contribute their thoughts, ideas and feelings about what the river means to them and this will be showcased through a range of media including a series of short films, a book and an exhibition at Tullie House Museum. There will also be a touring exhibition throughout the five year project which will show the progress of the project and enable people throughout the catchment to submit their contributions. The aim is to enthuse local people about the river in a partnership project between Eden Rivers Trust, Carlisle College, Tullie House Museum and Art Gallery Trust and Cumbria County Council Carlisle Archive Centre.

Simon Johnson, Eden Rivers Trust Director, said, “We are delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this grant. This is the result of two years of very hard planning, fundraising and partnership building work to secure £528,000 of committed resource over the five years of the project which we require to match the HLF grant. Our 2013 Charity Auction on 19 October is just one of a number of fundraising initiatives we have in place to provide match funding over the five year programme.

"The grant is of strategic importance in terms of planning a future for the river in a way that has wide ranging social and environmental benefits. The project will be working with a range of partners and will act as an engine of change to drive outcomes for communities and those organisations supporting them throughout the Eden Valley. The Eden is a beautiful river teeming with wildlife and is a vital part of our landscape and economy. It is great to know that we will be able to get local people involved in protecting it for future generations.”

Wes Johnson, Principal, Newton Rigg College, said, “We are delighted to be working so closely with the Eden Rivers Trust on this scheme. It is not only a great opportunity to strengthen our links with the organisation, but helps support the next generation of river conservationists.”

Sara Hilton, Head of HLF North West, said: “The River Eden and its environs are hugely precious parts of our natural heritage, widely recognised for their rare habitats and species. This exemplary project is designed to engage local communities by providing them with the knowledge of how to maintain the landscape and get actively involved with its care and guardianship. I can’t think of a better use of HLF money than to protect this area for future generations to enjoy.”

Notes to editors

About Eden Rivers Trust

- Eden Rivers Trust is a charity dedicated to conserving the beautiful River Eden in Cumbria and its hundred of miles of tributaries.
- It was set up in 1996 and has completed over 200 projects to improve the condition of the river for its wildlife and for people to enjoy.
- The River Eden is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is classed by Europe as a Special Area of Conservation.
- The trust has been working with more than 200 farms to help them manage their land in the most environmentally-friendly way for the river.
- To protect the Eden from erosion and pollution fences have been installed along more than 90 miles of the river and in excess of 20,000 trees have been planted. This has not reduced access for people but it has stopped animals trampling the river banks and polluting the water.
- In the last five years staff from the trust have met more than 10,000 people, half of them school children from 50 different schools.
- Annual surveys use electronic devices in the water which momentarily stun the fish, allowing experts to assess their numbers and whether the population is improving. This is carried out at hundreds of sites and allows the trust to identify any problems.
- The trust relies on fund raising and grants to carry out this vital work. It needs sponsorship and donations from individuals and businesses. People can donate, become a Friend of Eden Rivers Trust or volunteer.
- Further information on is available on their Eden Rivers Trust website.

Further information

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