Clyde & Avon Valley set to blossom with £1.9m Heritage Lottery support

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The funding is for a for a five-year programme of interlinked projects which will tackle the environmental needs of the landscape, conserving and restoring the natural and built heritage while celebrating the history and heritage of the area. Today's announcement is expected to attract a further £3m in matched funding.

Cutting through the industrial heartland of Scotland, the character of Clyde & Avon Valley illustrates the relationship between man and landscape. From New Lanark to Chatelherault, the Clyde flows through a dramatic, wooded gorge and over spectacular falls before entering a flat-bottomed valley. The fertile soil here has long been associated with horticulture and fruit growing. Historically, local coal was extracted to heat the glasshouses, the power of the river harnessed for the mills and the valley's microclimate put to use in growing fruit. The rivers' gorges are home to ancient broadleaf woodlands and orchards, where a wonderful array of birdlife – such as warblers, bullfinches and kingfishers – can be spotted.

The LP programme, led by South Lanarkshire Council, covers an area of 129km2 with over two million people living within 15 miles of it, including six of the most deprived areas of Scotland. The project is designed to reconnect communities with the valley landscape so that they can understand, enjoy and celebrate the built and natural heritage that they share.

Ten public bodies and charitable organisations will work together with communities and landowners to manage native woodland and orchards, encourage volunteering, help existing community groups and work with young, unemployed people in providing training in locally important skills.

Colin McLean, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in Scotland, said: "The Clyde & Avon Valley is a beautiful area but its inherent beauty needs to be managed if we are to prevent it from becoming overgrown, inaccessible and unable to sustain our indigenous species. The Landscape Partnership programme does just that, and more. What communities have often already started on a small scale, HLF is delighted to take forward, bringing real cohesion to the natural and built heritage of a region and reconnecting people with what often lies overlooked on their doorstep."

Commenting, Aileen Campbell MSP, said: "The Clyde & Avon Valley covers a wonderful landscape and is full of rich history. Many people from Clydesdale will have memories of the booming tomatoes and soft fruits industry in the valley. The Clyde & Avon Landscape Partnership has set an ambitious programme to restore and help bring this beautiful area back to the heart of the community. The Heritage Lottery Fund's grant of £1.9 million and the expected match funding is a major boost for the project. Not only does the partnership aim to conserve the natural and built heritage of the area, it will provide fantastic training and learning opportunities for local people.

"I look forward to the landscape being restored and I hope as the project progresses we will begin to see Clyde valley fruits in our shops again. I will be doing all I can to help support the partnership to ensure local residents can once again enjoy and benefit from all this area has to offer."

Councillor Eileen Logan, Chair of the Rural Partnership, said: “This project is a fantastic opportunity for all the partners to work closely with the local residents and land owners to preserve and enhance the beautiful landscape in the Clyde & Avon Valleys. The combination of ancient woodland, wood pasture, orchards and horticulture created over the past centuries has left a landscape mosaic that is highly attractive and outstandingly rich in biodiversity.

"We have a tremendous natural asset right here on our doorstep and this project will help people to understand what makes the valleys special and so help them to enjoy and appreciate it even more."

South Lanarkshire Council’s Head of Regeneration Services, Jim McCaffer, said: “We are delighted to be lead partner on this project and will be looking to bring together the specific areas of expertise from all Partners to ensure we deliver the main aims of the programme. We are particularly interested in engaging the local community as it they who are vital to the success of the project.

“It provides an exciting and wide range of opportunities for people to re-connect with the landscape and will hopefully encourage everyone to get out of doors to enjoy the natural beauty that surrounds them.”

As part of its strategic plan, South Lanarkshire is a development priority area for the Heritage Lottery Fund. It is working hard with lots of local groups to make sure that they make the most of the lottery grants available to them.

To date, HLF has invested almost £19m in 102 projects across the region but there is the potential to untap much more. If you have a heritage project you would like to discuss, then please contact Lori Kika at the Heritage Lottery Fund on 0131 225 9450.

Notes to editors

The Clyde & Avon Valley Partnership is made up of the following partner organisations:

South Lanarkshire Council (Lead Partner)
Scottish Natural Heritage
Rural Development Trust
North Lanarkshire Council
Central Scotland Forest Trust
Scottish Wildlife Trust
Royal Society for the Protection of Birds
Clydesdale Community Initiatives
Foresty Commission
New Lanark Trust

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