HLF pledges £1.3m support for Cumbria's heritage

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Since 1994, HLF has invested over £72million into preserving Cumbria’s rich heritage. From restoring Chances Park, Carlisle to Wordsworth House in Cockermouth, the effect of Lottery money is plain for all to see. Today’s two grants will revitalise some of Cumbria’s most important natural habitats and restore an impressive 18th-century Corn Mill for the local community.

Sara Hilton, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: “These two projects reflect Cumbria’s rich natural and industrial heritage perfectly and both mean a lot to their respective communities. Today’s HLF investment will not only enable vital restoration works to begin at both sites but also offer a fantastic range of training and volunteering opportunities for local people, ranging from habitat monitoring in the hay meadows to learning how to repoint a wall at the Heron Corn Mill. We are delighted to be supporting these transformational projects that will provide real and far-reaching benefits to Cumbria’s local heritage and communities.”

Tim Farron MP, welcomed the award, saying: “Here in Cumbria we are incredibly proud of our cultural heritage and the Cumbria Hay Meadows project and the Heron Corn Mill are two fantastic examples of what we have to offer as a county. The £1.3m being invested by the Heritage Lottery Fund will enable essential restoration of our beloved landscapes and habitats in the Hay Meadows as well as developing the already brilliant community asset at Heron Corn Mill, which will provide training and volunteering opportunities to the local community as well as acting as an important tourist attraction. This announcement is extremely welcome as a means of supporting and protecting the future of our local heritage and communities at a time when many cultural projects are struggling for funding.”

Restoring our precious Hay Meadows - £429,600
Upland flower-rich hay meadows are some of the rarest habitats in England and one of the most at risk of being lost completely. Cumbria has 31% of England’s upland hay meadows and HLF’s grant will help halt their decline in the county and ensure that volunteers and staff are equipped with the necessary skills to maintain them. Hay meadows are thought to date back over 2,000 years and are a product of man’s management of the land. They provide a home to a huge variety of wildlife and are a precious part of the county’s landscape.

The project, run by Cumbria Biodiversity Partnership, will work with land owners and farmers to restore at least 65ha of upland flower-rich hay meadows and provide training in sustainable meadow management. A volunteer programme will also train 60 volunteers to get to grips with carrying out hay meadow surveys. Working with HMP Haverigg will give inmates the chance to get involved with the project and benefit flower-rich hay meadows whilst learning new and valuable skills, gaining qualifications and helping with their overall rehabilitation.

Graham Jackson-Pitt, Cumbria Biodiversity Manager, said: “We are delighted to receive this grant from HLF. Not only will it kick start a programme of hay meadow restoration and volunteer surveys but it will also provide new opportunities to learn about and participate in hay meadow conservation. These meadows are biodiversity gems that are part of the farming landscape of Cumbria, however they are becoming increasingly rare and we can’t afford to lose them.”

Bringing Heron Corn Mill back to life - £939,100
Situated on the weir of the River Bela in Beetham, Heron Corn Mill, which dates back to the 18th century, is a rare example of an operational upland watermill. HLF’s investment will be used to make vital repairs to the mill building and

vastly improve its facilities and overall visitor offer. The medieval mill site is already widely used by the local community by groups including the local history societies, Age UK and the Wood Education Group and these improvements will boost visitor numbers significantly. Original features, such as the lowder frame and exterior waterwheel, will be restored and the exterior wheel will, once finished, also generate the mill's electricity alongside the hydropower turbine.

A key part of the project will be introducing a diverse range of learning opportunities which will enable the mill to attract a much wider range of visitors. Guided walks and talks, craft workshops and new resources for schools will help people interact with and better understand the history of the mill and why it's so important to the local community. Traditional building skills training will also be on offer consisting of, amongst others, roofing, masonry and millwright placements. The mill will be an important example of a sustainable historic building once completed which harks back to times gone by when it was an important food and animal feed provider for the village of Beetham, producing many of the staples of everyday life.

Audrey Steely, Creative Project Manager at Heron Corn Mill, said: "We are so pleased to have been awarded this HLF grant, as the mill is such an important building within our surroundings, demonstrating how water power was used through the ages. It will create so many new opportunities for us, and also enable access to be greatly improved for our locals and visitors"

Further information

HLF press office: Laura Bates on 020 7591 6027, email: lbates@hlf.org.uk.