

£2.7m for Dorset wildlife

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The Great Heath Living Landscape is one of the largest conservation projects in the UK. The project, which will total £4.7million, will secure the protection and management of almost 1,500 acres of wildlife rich heathland, grassland, woods and wetland for the benefit of people and wildlife in Poole, Bournemouth, Christchurch and East Dorset. The HLF grant will enable the purchase of nationally and internationally important habitats at Holes Bay and Lytchett Bay in Poole Harbour and heathlands at Parley Common, Ferndown Common, Dunyeats Hill and Upton Heath.

The project aims to link two outstanding areas of natural heritage – the New Forest National Park and the Wild Purbeck Nature Improvement Area – with high quality access and interpretation linking dozens of sites

across the area. This will create thousands of opportunities for people to learn about, enjoy and play an active role in the conservation of this special area.

Heathland sites, such as Upton Heath, provide a home for many rare and threatened species, including the Dartford Warbler which is now thriving after numbers plummeted to just eleven breeding pairs nationally in the 1960s, four of which were in Dorset, following severe winter weather. All six of the UK reptiles can be found on the heathland, including the nationally rare smooth snake and sand lizard which can only be seen in a few places in the UK.

DWT Director of Operations, Brian Bleese, said: “Buying this land from the Canford Estate was a once in a lifetime opportunity, and thanks to the HLF funding, generous donations from the public, local businesses and funding from our partners, we can now develop an urban Living Landscape which is rich in wildlife, highly valued, enjoyed and nurtured by people. We aim to provide high quality access networks and interpretation, to allow everyone to learn about and experience the stunning wildlife on their doorstep.”

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “Not only will The Great Heath Living Landscape project secure, protect and conserve vital parts of Dorset’s natural heritage, it will also create a varied and exciting range of opportunities for people of all ages to get involved. Volunteers and visitors will have great fun while learning about the sites and their role in our biodiversity and how we can all work together to make sure they exist for future generations.

“It’s also fantastic to see that some of these sites fall into our development areas, meaning historically these places have had less HLF funding than others. This project will provide local people with much improved access to the natural heritage help drive local tourism.”

The first stage of the project established by DWT, Borough of Poole, Poole Harbour Commissioners, The Erica Trust, Amphibian and Reptile Conservation and Dorset County Council was called the Urban Wildlink project, which received an initial £85,900 from HLF in April 2013, to help DWT and its partners to consult the local community, stakeholders and prospective new partners about the development of The Great Heath Living Landscape.

The Urban Wildlink consultation phase revealed overwhelming support for the project from all sections of the community, who placed huge importance on their natural heritage and felt it would contribute to the local environment and their everyday lives.

We still need to raise some additional funds to match the HLF grant and secure The Great Heath for generations to come.

About Dorset Wildlife Trust

Working for a secure future for Dorset’s wildlife enriching the quality of life Dorset Wildlife Trust works to champion wildlife and natural places, to engage and inspire people and to promote sustainable living. Founded in 1961, DWT is now the largest voluntary nature conservation organisation in Dorset, with over 25,000 members and over 40 nature reserves. Most are open daily and there are visitor centres providing a wealth of wildlife information at Brooklands Farm, Lorton Meadows, Kingcombe Meadows and Brownsea Island Nature Reserves, the Purbeck Marine Wildlife Reserve and the Urban Wildlife Centre at Upton Heath Nature Reserve. DWT plays a key role in dealing with local environmental issues and leads the way in establishing the practices of sustainable development and engaging new audiences in conservation, particularly in the urban areas.

The Great Heath Living Landscape – an Urban Living Landscape in Dorset will deliver the following exciting objectives:

- to provide enhanced opportunities for visitors and local residents to enjoy and learn about the area's fantastic natural heritage
- to improve physical access to local green space close to high density urban areas
- to develop relationships with local landowners in order to enhance conservation management of land in private ownership and to open up access to more greenspace in the area
- to provide increased involvement and volunteering opportunities for people in a variety of wildlife habitats on the urban margin
- to improve access to the marine environment on the fringes of Poole Harbour to improve its conservation value and increase public awareness and enjoyment

Sites include land at Hampreston and High Mead Lane, Award Road, Ferndown Common, Delph Wood, Arrowsmith Copse, Dunyeats Hill, Corfe Lodge Road, Upton Heath, Beacon Hill, Cottage Farm (Happy Bottom), Ashington Paddock, Barrow Hill, Wimborne Road, Rushcombe Bottom, Parley Common, Tricketts Cross, Lytchett Bay and Holes Bay.

The full Great Heath Living Landscape project will cost will be £4.7 million, we have already secured almost £2 million and have been awarded £2.7 million from the Heritage Lottery Fund and need to raise a further £50,000 by public appeal.

The Great Heath Living Landscape is a partnership project involving Dorset Wildlife Trust, the Erica Trust, Poole Harbour Commissioners, Borough of Poole, Dorset County Council Countryside Service and Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Trust. The project is supported by Bournemouth Borough Council, Christchurch Borough Council, East Dorset District Council and Natural England.

We have identified a number of priority development areas within the South West, including Bournemouth, Poole, Christchurch and East Dorset. They will be the focus of additional targeted activity by our development staff who will be doing more to raise awareness about Heritage Lottery Fund programmes and supporting local organisations and groups in making applications for grants in these areas. Priority development areas will not receive automatic funding but our aim is to generate a greater number of good quality bids from these areas which will be able to compete with applications from other places.

Further information

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Investing £5million in UK's natural heritage