Durham’s limestone landscapes

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has today given the go ahead to rejuvenate one of the North East’s most spectacular areas of countryside. Durham County Council and Limestone Landscapes Partnerships have been awarded £2million for the scheme and can now start work on reviving this much loved area.

Durham’s Limestone landscapes – LP first-round pass of £2million including £100,000 development funding

East Durham’s Magnesian Limestone plateau – a narrow belt of 207km² of land which spreads across south-east Tyne and Wear and east Durham – supports a wide range of species and habitats, including rare butterflies, such as the Durham Argus butterfly. HLF’s support will help restore this one of a kind landscape in an area of much needed funding. In light of industrialisation, the area has suffered significant damage and urgently needs a revamp. It will also help people who live in the urban fringes of this area to rediscover the countryside and get involved through volunteering opportunities, school trips and summer excavation projects.

The area holds two thirds of the UK’s Magnesian Limestone Grassland, and is of huge international importance. This exceptional landscape boasts yellow sands, fossil rich Marl slate and contains a rare fossil fish which dates back from the last ice age. This rich site is so unique to the North East, not only due to mass of wildlife it contains and its magnificent backdrop; it is also of huge archaeological importance and contains fascinating Bronze Age ritual sites and evidence of Iron Age and Romano-British Settlements. The funding will go towards bringing together the fragmented landscape through conservation work and local involvement.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said: “We are extremely lucky to have this stunning countryside on our doorstep. People love this area and its restoration will let an important part of the local heritage become living history. The restored space will have a significant impact on the community by attracting visitors and bringing the area’s history to life. We are thrilled to be able to play a part in sustaining this valuable part of the North East’s heritage.”

Limestone Landscapes is one of six earmarked first-round passes* totalling £7.9million made through the HLF Landscape Partnership Programme (LP). Other areas that have benefitted from funding are:

- Windermere in Cumbria, one of England’s most dramatic lakeland and mountainous landscapes
- The Ll?n Pensinsula, a dramatic strip of North Wales coastline surrounded by the Irish Sea
- Derbyshire and North Nottinghamshire’s Southern Magnesian Limestone Area, linked by an ‘Archaeological Way’ with new paths to the internationally-famous Creswell Crags;
- Lincolnshire’s Coastal Marshes, a remote grassland coastal plain and home to the rare breed of Lincoln Red cattle
- The Faughan Valley, a changing landscape running from the foothills of the Sperrins Mountains along the Faughan River to the outskirts of Derry.

HLF’s Landscape Partnerships have been running for the past five years and these new awards now bring the total invested to £55million. 35 landscapes across the UK are benefiting including this wonderful Limestone Landscape in the North East. The scheme will enable the surrounding residents to get involved with their heritage and benefit from this

diverse and beautiful scene that is so special to the North East.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has also funded other Landscape Partnerships in the North East including the Unique North Pennines, a place whose importance is recognised through its multiple designations for landscape, habitats, species and historic heritage, and Mineral Valleys which restored a traditional range of wildlife habitats in the upper and mid Wear Valley.