Grant boost for environmental champions

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The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded a grant of £1.9m to the Limestone Landscapes Partnership. The money will be used to fund a three year project which will start this spring.

Durham County Council's Limestone Landscapes Development Officer, Ken Bradshaw, said: "This programme of work will bring about a series of improvements to the landscape that will help communities across the area better understand, enjoy and care for this vital part of our heritage.

"The grant will help improve many natural habitats too, providing a really welcome boost for a wealth of wildlife including species such as the Durham Argos butterfly and glow worm, associated with the limestone grasslands.

"As well as opportunities to be involved through education and training events, the annual Limestone Festival will take place at a number of sites in mid-June every year.

"By working with residents of all ages and a host of interested groups we very much hope that the Durham Magnesian Limestone becomes a place where people will be justifiably proud to live, work and play."

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said:"This is a much loved area and this scheme will involve more people than ever in their landscape and its history.

"The restoration of this unique landscape will have a significant impact on the people that live within the area, as well as the varied animal and plant species that form such an important part of its diversity. The Heritage Lottery Fund is thrilled to be able to support this scheme and to help sustain a valuable part of the North East's heritage."

The Partnership includes Durham County Council and four other Local Authorities: South Tyneside, City of Sunderland, Hartlepool and Darlington plus Natural England, Groundwork North East, Durham Wildlife Trust, the Archaeology and Architectural Society of Durham and Northumberland and community representatives.

The target area for the scheme is the Durham Magnesian Limestone, which runs along the coast from Hartlepool in the south east to South Shields in the north east and forms a triangle of land ending around Newton Aycliffe.

This latest project aims to restore and conserve a number of key sites and buildings combined with a series of educational and community events to learn about, be inspired by and celebrate the rare limestone, associated biodiversity and cultural heritage.

Initiatives will also be based on the historic environment using archaeological excavations of Neolithic sites to producing advice and guidance on how to use modern techniques to conserve pre-1919 houses.

Four full time jobs and one part time will be created for the three year programme.

www.limestonelandscapes.info

Notes to editors

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, the HLF invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4bn across the UK including £214m in the North East alone.

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