Guerrillas on the Heath

09/07/2012

The RSPB has received a confirmed grant of £440,600 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) to build links between people and nature on Hampstead Heath. Work preparing facilities for the three year project, entitled Wild About Hampstead Heath, starts this year, with activities and events starting in spring 2013.

Conservation charity, the RSPB, will be supported by four partners in running the project. Wild About Hampstead Heath aims to enthuse tens of thousands of Londoners, many from some of the most deprived areas of the UK, about the Heath's wildlife and natural heritage through a programme of activities and the creation of new wildlife areas.

Hampstead Heath – managed by the City of London Corporation - is one of London's most popular open spaces, attracting over seven million visitors a year and situated less than four miles from Trafalgar Square. It has a rich natural heritage but its magic lies in the contrast between its countryside feel and its diverse and often dense urban surroundings.

Martyn Foster, RSPB London Manager, said: 'We're very excited to be working on the Heath to enhance new and existing visitors' experience of the wildlife that lives in this incredible place. Working in partnership with the City of London Corporation, English Heritage, Camden Community Consortium and Heath Hands we'll be able to reach thousands of people in hundreds of different ways. The potential to directly improve people's health and well-being through projects like this is well documented. We are grateful to the Heritage Lottery Fund for signalling their support with this funding.'

Sue Bowers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund London, said: "This exciting project aims to involve people of all backgrounds and ages in the natural heritage around them, through learning, volunteering, and the protection of wildlife on the Heath – one of the largest and most-loved of London's green open spaces. We look forward to seeing the project develop and hearing about the benefits it will bring our communities."

Jeremy Simons, Chairman of the City of London Corporation's Hampstead Heath Management Committee, said: "Community involvement has always been at the heart of the City's approach in managing Hampstead Heath. We are looking forward to working with the RSPB and our four partner organisations to deliver Wild About Hampstead Heath, for the enjoyment of all London's communities, and particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds."

The plans include training a team of volunteers, drawn from the Heath's diverse local communities, to lead 'guerrilla style', pop-up events showcasing wildlife. Cutting edge audio-visual equipment and passionate people will help tell the story of the Heath's natural heritage. Events will also be held at local community organisations surrounding the Heath to inspire more people to benefit from this treasure on their doorstep.

New environmental education sessions - principally at Golders Hill Park - will enthuse a new generation about London's wildlife, and an exciting 'Heath Friendly Schools' programme with four local schools will transport children's lessons from the confines of their classrooms to the inspirational setting of the Heath.

The funding will also bring some practical improvements to the Heath in the shape of better facilities for schoolchildren at Golders Hill Park, a classroom and pond dipping platform, new meadow areas to support a variety of wildlife, and a custom-made kingfisher bank to improve opportunities for Heath visitors to see these magnificent birds.

There will be more opportunities for schools, local people and visitors to discover and enjoy the Heath's wildlife, alongside some vocational training and an increased programme of volunteering possibilities.

Notes to editors

A confirmed award means that money had already been earmarked by HLF for the project in question and that the full amount has now been secured.

The RSPB is Europe's largest conservation charity, working to save and support wild life and wild places. With more than a million registered supporters, we're working today for a better tomorrow, by championing development bringing economic growth alongside a healthy environment for people and wildlife. Find out more about our work in the Capital by visiting our blog page, or follow us on Facebook.

RSPB will be working with the following partners:

City of London Corporation is a uniquely diverse organisation. It supports and promotes the City as the world leader in international finance and business services and provides local services and policing for those working in, living in and visiting the Square Mile. It also provides valued services to London and the nation. These include the Barbican Centre and the Guildhall School of Music & Drama; the Guildhall Library and Art Gallery and London Metropolitan Archive; education (including three independent schools and sponsor of three City Academies); five Thames bridges (including Tower Bridge and the Millennium Bridge); the Central Criminal Court at Old Bailey; over 10,000 acres of open spaces (including Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest), and three wholesale food markets.

It is also London's Port Health Authority and runs the Animal Reception Centre at Heathrow. It works in partnership with neighbouring boroughs on the regeneration of surrounding areas and the City of London Corporation's charity, the City Bridge Trust, makes grants of more than £15 million annually to charitable projects in London.

Camden Community Consortium is a consortium of four of the major community centres in Camden (see below), which are based in areas of high deprivation. The consortium was established in 2010 to enable the community centres to better meet the needs of local residents of the central Camden area, share resources and develop new opportunities.

Castlehaven Community Association is a high profile, vibrant community association inspiring and empowering people of all ages, cultures and abilities to strive, both mentally and physically to achieve their full potential. We are based in the heart of Camden Town.

Kentish Town Community Centre is a thriving multi-purpose community resource that provides a wide range of services and activities and a hub for the whole community in Kentish Town to create and take part in a range of positive activities.

Maiden Lane Community Centre is a vibrant Community Centre providing services and activities for everyone in our community, catering for a wide range of interests and age groups. Our users tend to come from Maiden Lane, Agar Grove and St. Pancras Way Estates, Elm Village and Camden Square.

Queen's Crescent Community Association improves the quality of life for local residents, especially those living in Gospel Oak, Haverstock, Maitland Park and the Hampstead area. Our aim is to foster social cohesion by helping grassroots initiatives to grow and empowering local residents.

English Heritage looks after the National Heritage Collection of historic sites and monuments, including Kenwood House on the northern side of Hampstead Heath. The House is currently closed as part of the Caring for Kenwood programme of repairs and restoration. English Heritage is also committed to engaging people with the natural heritage of the wider Kenwood Estate. As the Government's principal advisor on heritage, we also advise on what should be protected and on how changes to our unique legacy of historic buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites should be managed.

Heath Hands is a volunteer organisation created to help preserve the special character of Hampstead Heath and to give everyone who enjoys the Heath an opportunity to make a difference. Our volunteers work undertake a variety of conservation and maintenance tasks, all over the Heath and at Kenwood.

RSPB London is a proud member of The London Biodiversity Partnership, co-ordinating conservation work across the Capital.

Further information

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