Spring-loaded launch for new Hengistbury Head



On Saturday, 12 April 2014, Chris Packham, joined by the Mayor of Bournemouth, will unveil a commemorative plaque and thank an invited audience of all partners involved in helping to make the new centre a reality.

The centre will then open to the public from 12 noon where visitors will have the opportunity to meet with Chris Packham and get books signed as well as being able to explore the centre, its interactive displays and wildlife garden and speak with the centre's many dedicated volunteers.

The launch marks the start of 'Spring-Loaded' – a week long programme of activities (12 – 21 April) suitable for visitors of all ages.

Chris Packham will be leading a short guided walk from the centre on 12 April 2014. Booking is essential and spaces are limited.

Other activities will include:

- Photo safari with Brockenhurst College at Hengistbury Head Outdoor Centre – 12 April 2014
- Stargazing – guided walk at Hengistbury Head – 14 April 2014

- Willow weaving one day course run by Brockenhurst College at Hengistbury Head Outdoor Centre – 15 April 2014
- Beautiful butterflies – the RSPB will be leading a children's workshop to create a beautiful butterfly mobile – 16 April 2014
- Moth and mammals – discover the variety of moths and mammals that live at Hengistbury Head – 17 April 2014
- Bird Ringing and bird walk (uncover the mystery of bird migration) with our experts – 21 April 2014
- For a full listing of activities, costs and how to book, visit the Hengistbury Head Spring-loaded website.

Councillor Lawrence Williams, Cabinet Member for Tourism, Leisure and Culture, said: "I'd like to thank all of our partners and sponsors involved in helping to make the new Hengistbury Head Visitor Centre a reality, I'm really proud of what we've achieved. Since its opening in December the centre has proved hugely popular already and it promises to be a fantastic resource for the area for years to come.

"Hengistbury Head attracts more than one million visitors every year and now, for the first time, we will have a unique and dedicated visitor centre where members of the public will be able to come and learn about the area's rich heritage, including the wildlife, geology and archaeology that can be found here."

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "This new centre will, for the first time, give the public the opportunity to see and handle some of the wonderful archaeological collections unearthed at Hengistbury Head over the past 100 years. HLF's grant has helped transform the visitor experience and will help encourage even more people to the site to learn about the natural and archaeological heritage of the area. Bournemouth is an important development area for HLF and we are working hard to increase the number of projects in this part of the South West so we are particularly delighted about this first-class addition to Bournemouth's cultural and heritage offering."

The third annual Hengistbury Head Photo Competition for amateurs of all ages will also be launched by Chris Packham. The competition runs from 12 April to 15 August 2014.

Notes to editors

The centre has cost approximately £1million, with £432,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund, £300,000 from developer contributions with the remaining £300,000 from the Landfill Communities Fund via Canford Environmental Ltd.

The new centre opened in December 2013 and has so far attracted more than 30,000 visitors. The centre was constructed around the existing thatched barn adjacent to the Iron Age Double Dykes. Part of the work involved an eco-build extension to the existing barn cottage which boasts a range of eco-friendly features including a green roof, solar panels and straw bale walls.

The new centre offers:

- An exhibition area for archaeology, ecology and geology celebrating 12,000 years of Bournemouth's prehistory from the Stone Age through to the present day
- Interactive displays including video presentations, microscope, aquaria and wildlife webcams located on heron and little egret nests, the lagoon and marshes, bird boxes, bird feeders and a small mammal burrow
- Landscaping to create outdoor learning areas and wildlife garden in the current grounds (woodland/wildflower meadow/pond studies/weather station/sensory garden etc.)
- Easy access for all abilities and ages to information and activities

- Work space for centre staff, volunteers and other community groups such as the Hengistbury Head Supporters Group, Hengistbury Residents' Association and Christchurch Harbour Ornithological Group and key partners, Brockenhurst College and RSPB
- A retail outlet similar to a National Trust Shop
- Toilet facilities

Brockenhurst College is responsible for providing an Environmental Education Service (teaching, resources and administration). Bournemouth and Oxford Universities have worked with the Russell-Cotes Museum in overseeing the archiving and display of the outstanding archaeological collection including its transfer back to Hengistbury Head.

The centre is a community run project involving more than 50 trained volunteer Heritage Wardens and 10 apprentices.

HLF has identified a number of priority development areas within the South West including Bournemouth. They will be the focus of additional targeted activity by the 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.

Further information

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