Heritage trail launched at Parkanaur

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This project allowed the Speedwell Trust to develop activities which explored the history of Parkanaur. The project focused on two main themes: a cross-community educational programme to raise awareness and understanding of the built and natural heritage of Parkanaur estate among local schools and a heritage trail to interpret the history of the park.

The schools' programme, developed by the Speedwell staff and Sharon Carroll from Enspire, had three elements: living history workshops in the Manor house depicting life in a Victorian school; an activity investigating the unique tree species in the Parkanaur Arboretum and a 'mystery object' activity involving artefacts from the museum at Parkanaur. The project was an overwhelming success with 33 schools and over 850 children participating. The children were surveyed on their opinions of the project. 90% enjoyed the programme, 87% said that it was fun while 76% thought that it was interesting.

A heritage trail was also created throughout the Forest Park. Nine interpretative signage strategically positioned around the park allow visitors to learn more about the history and biodiversity of the estate. The trail enables young people and members of the public to explore the park independently all year round.

Funding for the project was awarded through HLF's Your Heritage grants programme, which provides funding of up to £50,000 for projects that enable communities to explore, protect and celebrate all aspects of their heritage.

Eamon McClean, Trust Manager, said: "Speedwell Trust was delighted with the outcome of the 'Shared Heritage' project. We worked in partnership with all the stakeholders in the Parkanaur Estate including the Forest Service, the Manor House, the Dungannon and South Tyrone Borough Council to develop a cross community schools programme and to create a heritage trail that the local community and visitors to the park can avail of. The launch of the heritage trail was extra special for Speedwell as it coincided with our twentieth anniversary of facilitating cross community programmes to schools throughout Northern Ireland."

Bob Brown, member of HLF's Northern Ireland committee, said: "Parkanaur Manor House is one of the oldest and most important buildings in the area, and together with the extensive grounds which contain 400 year old oaks, beeches and pines, a walled garden and white fallow deer, is a unique heritage asset. We are delighted to be involved in this fantastic project which has opened up the rich history and natural heritage of Parkanaur for many more people to explore and enjoy.