Learning centre for new country park

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The project, at Newstead and Annesley Country Park, will help to train up volunteers who are vital to the park's future success.

Newstead Enterprise is a not-for-profit organisation and registered charity which has galvanised the local community in the former mining villages to create the 230-acre park over the past two years. The site is rich in natural and industrial heritage and local people have already helped planting hedges, installing fencing and gateways. They also assisted in building a single storey eco-visitor centre facing one of the sites' two lakes, which is currently under construction.

The HLF grant will enable completion of the centre's education hub where volunteers will in future be trained in the many tasks required to sustain and conserve the whole site. The project also enables the production of information boards and thousands of leaflets for distribution to visitors explaining the industrial heritage of the collieries and the varied flora and fauna to be seen around the area.

Newstead Enterprise will be planning a special event to mark the completion and official opening of the completed education hub due to take place this August.

A colliery was originally built at Annesley in 1865 and a second at neighbouring Newstead in 1873. Together they produced some of the country's finest quality coal and the area thrived until the decline of the coal industry nationally in the late 1980s.

The local community successfully defeated a plan to use the site as a waste tip by emphasising its biodiversity which has led to its designation as a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Following community consultation lead by the local group Future Newstead as part of their parish plan, and local angling project CAST, the local charity Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire were successful in purchasing the land. Newstead Enterprise is now taking forward the vision through the Country Park.

Emma Sayer, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund East Midlands, said: "The community has rallied round magnificently to save this important industrial and wildlife site. The education hub project will contribute to its long-term survival by helping volunteers to continue their good work so that future generations can enjoy the area and learn about its history."

Penny Halewood, Managing Director, for Newstead Enterprises and Head of Project Development at Rural Community Action Nottinghamshire, said: "We are delighted to receive this important grant to enable us to get the education hub completed and enable community members to access the building. The community activities to create much needed site information will help local people to find out more about the sites habitats and species, and for visitors for years to come to learn more about our beautiful site and its history".

Further information

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