Lottery cash to revitalise Wandle Valley

01/08/2011

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has awarded £78,000 to a consortium of four boroughs, led by Wandsworth, which will now aim to revitalise the Wandle Valley as a major community asset to people living in Wandsworth, Merton, Sutton and Croydon.

The money will be used to draw up plans to protect the valley's open spaces and diverse natural environment and encourage greater involvement in the life of the river by its neighbouring communities through volunteering and education. It will also aim to maximise the area's potential for sustainable transport, health, tourism and leisure.

The award is the first urban landscape improvement scheme that the HLF has made under its Landscape Partnership (LP) programme*. The organisation has also set aside a further £1.9m to develop the project further in the coming years, if the next round of proposals meets the HLF's funding criteria.

Wandsworth's cabinet member for environment and culture Cllr Jonathan Cook said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this support to help improve the environment the length and breadth of the Wandle Valley.

"The four boroughs are committed to working together in partnership and with the HLF and a number of other voluntary groups and agencies to breathe new life into the areas around the river. Our joint aim is to make the Wandle Valley a wonderful natural resource for local communities, where people can go to enjoy its beauty, history and culture.

"This is an ambitious project that demonstrates a shared vision and a broad consensus for the future of this historic river and its surroundings. We are committed to working together to make that dream a reality."

Sue Bowers, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund for London, said: "Tucked away in south west London and spanning four boroughs, is this wonderful inner-city landscape running the stretch of River Wandle. Landscapes are all around us and have been inspiring people for centuries, whether that be poetry writing, photography, rambling, riding a bike or just simple enjoying the view.

"With this HLF award under the ground-breaking Landscape Partnership Scheme, we can help local communities such as those around the Wandle course actively get involved and take care of the natural environment around them."

For centuries, the River Wandle has played a vital role in life of people in south west London. The river rises as a chalk stream in the Surrey Hills and meanders through the four boroughs before reaching the Thames at Wandsworth, flowing through residential areas, historic town centres and a number of valued parks and open spaces.

The river has a rich cultural and industrial heritage, with associations with William Morris, Liberty Print Works, calico printing, and the production of watercress and lavender. A number of the mills which generated power for agriculture and industry remain along the course of the river, whilst there are also remnants of grander landscapes of former country estates.

Notes to editors

* A Landscape Partnership (LP) earmarked first-round pass means that money has been set aside by the Heritage

Lottery Fund (HLF) for the scheme in question. Competition at this stage is tough, and while it does not guarantee funding, it is an indication of positive support. The applicant then progresses to the second round and submits a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award. This early level of strong financial commitment means that LPs can build strong partnerships with the assurance that funding for their scheme is in place provided that their final proposals fully meet the programme's criteria.