Lottery grant opens up Omagh’s natural heritage

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An area of important natural heritage in Omagh is to be preserved in a new project following the award of a £26,100 grant, the Heritage Lottery Fund announced today. Drumduff and Drumnakilly Community Association will create a publically accessible heritage trail through eight acres of lowland raised bog and birch woodland, and provide a range of associated education and learning activities.

Lowland raised bog is a priority habitat in Northern Ireland and is currently in decline. The new project will support the acquisition and conservation of the lowland raised bog and birch woodland which is adjacent to the Community Association’s facility, the Flaxmill Centre in Drumduff. The site, which is home to a wide variety of species including Sphagnum mosses, bog cotton and birds such as Meadow Pipits, will be transformed into the Mountain View Environmental Trail to protect, conserve and increase access to this natural heritage asset.

New walkways and observation points will be created to open up the site for members of the public to use and enjoy, and an outdoor classroom and information panels will be installed to help visitors learn more about the natural heritage of the bog.

Six volunteers will receive training in biodiversity skills to enable them to deliver a series of education activities including conducting further surveys to identify other plants and wildlife living in the area. Educational workbooks will be produced for use by local schoolchildren and 35 workshops will be held for schools, youth and community groups to increase understanding of, and encourage participation in, their local natural environment.

Commenting on the award, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: “This fantastic project will protect and open up this important area of environmental interest, and facilitate the observation and recording of the wide variety of plant and animal life that call this bog and woodland area their home.

“With participation and learning at the heart of the activities, the project will empower local people, through increased understanding and accessibility, to take care of the trail and explore opportunities to restore the bog and manage the woodland for generations to come.”

Paddy Ward from Drumduff and Drumnakilly Community Association said: “The Association is delighted to have received funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund for our environmental project. It has long been our aim to acquire this area of natural heritage adjacent to our community facility, the Flaxmill Centre, and make it accessible to the public.

This project will provide opportunities for schools, youth groups and the general public to nurture, study and enjoy the wildlife of the area. We also see it as an extension and enhancement of the services offered by our Community Association by promoting a better understanding of and regard for this area of unique natural and cultural heritage”.