Lottery grant to support local biodiversity games

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The new Games-themed heritage project, led by Coleraine Borough Council, will get underway in numerous areas across Northern Ireland in the coming months and will enable local people to learn more about and connect with the biodiversity of their area.

The Biodiversity Games 2012 project will focus activities in the areas of Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady, Antrim and Newtownabbey Borough Councils; Omagh, Fermanagh, Dungannon and South Tyrone, Cookstown, Magherafelt, Down, Newry and Mourne District Councils and Belfast City Council.

Working in partnership with organisations such as CEDaR, Butterfly Conservation NI, Conservation Volunteers NI and the Environmental Recorders Group the project will increase the biodiversity knowledge throughout these council areas by recruiting and training local volunteer recorders, and by doing so will increase local biodiversity records, including the records of Northern Ireland Priority Species.

The project has three main themes – moths and butterflies, bats and garden recording – and all events and activities will have a fun games link such as the moth marathon and grasshopper high jump.

The volunteer training programme will aim to engage with almost 500 local people providing them with the skills necessary to identify and record the biodiversity of their areas. They will learn about the species they are recording and its value within the ecosystem. The training will also show the participants how to submit their records to the national biodiversity database held by CEDaR. It is hoped that 80 of these volunteers will still be actively involved in recording local biodiversity far beyond the lifetime of the project.

The funding will also be used to purchase recording equipment such as species guides, bat detectors and moth traps, butterfly nets and bug boxes, which will be used during the training events and for longer-term recording activities.

Funding for the project was awarded through HLF's Your Heritage programme which provides grants of up to £50,000 for projects that explore, record and conserve all aspects of our local, regional or national heritage.

Announcing the award, Head of HLF Northern Ireland, Paul Mullan, said: "We are delighted to be involved in this innovative project which will recruit and train the local biodiversity heroes of the future. By taking steps now to ensure the skills and knowledge of our current recorders are passed on to the next generation, we can help to protect our natural environment and boost local conservation efforts."

Welcoming news of the award, Rachel Bain, Biodiversity Officer for Ballymoney, Coleraine, Limavady & Moyle Council, the lead partner of the project, added: "This is collaboration between eight Biodiversity Officers, we are all extremely excited about this project which will engage with a new generation of recorders, and highlight the importance of biodiversity recording in providing us with the wildlife records and knowledge we need to help protect and enhance our biodiversity resource for future generations."

HLF has a range of programmes to support heritage based projects both large and small, and since 1994 has awarded £146million to projects across Northern Ireland. For more information about HLF and its grants programmes, please call 028 9031 0120

Notes to editors

Since 1994 the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded £146 million to projects across Northern Ireland.

Further information

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