Loving our landscapes!

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Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) has announced 10 earmarked first-round passes* totalling £17m made through its Landscape Partnership (LP) programme. This programme helps conserve areas of distinctive landscape character and supports schemes that provide long-term social, economic and environmental benefits for rural areas. The landscapes receiving HLF support are:

- The White Cliffs of Dover – Dame Vera Lynn's favourite Kentish coastline, made-up of distinctive white cliffs and chalk downlands
- The mid Tees Valley – a 'lost' landscape between the Yorkshire Dales and North Pennines
- Druridge Bay – a former mining area on Northumberland's coast, characterised by mature woodland and Anglo-Saxon field systems
- The Belfast Hills – an arc of hills dramatically framing the city of Belfast
- Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – picturesque mountains and heathland habitats in County Down which provided the inspiration for CS Lewis' kingdom of Narnia
- The Staffordshire Moorlands – a substantial part of the Churnet Valley bordering the Peak District National Park
- Meres and Mosses – a flat glacial landscape in the 'dairying' country of north Shropshire and south Cheshire
- Clyde and Avon Valleys – two valleys in Scotland's industrial belt of Lanarkshire, defined by ancient woodlands and orchards
- Avalon Marshes – low-lying, habitat-rich wetlands to the west of Glastonbury in Somerset
- The Solway Plain – remote Cumbrian wetlands originally shaped by the agricultural practises of medieval Cistercian monks.

Over the past six years, HLF has been helping protect some of the UK's most treasured landscapes thanks to an investment totalling £72m. The 45 landscapes which have been supported, stretching from Orkney's Scapa Flow to the Isle of Wight's 'Needles', reflect the wonders and diversity of this country's natural heritage. Through the LP programme, key partnerships between public and community bodies are being forged enabling people to tackle the needs of their local landscapes in a co-ordinated and practical way.

Dame Jenny Abramsky, Chair of the HLF, said: "Landscapes play a huge role in our lives and are often the backdrop to daily routines - but we mustn't take them for granted. This significant investment by the Heritage Lottery Fund is important, particularly in the International Year of Biodiversity, because it not only encourages people to work together effectively but gives them a greater sense of involvement and connection to their own local landscape."

Nicholas Crane, writer and broadcaster, said: "My work has enabled me to travel the world and see some breathtaking scenery along the way. But I remain in awe of the range of landscapes we enjoy in the UK. I'm passionate about conserving our beautiful countryside and coastlines, and am particularly delighted that HLF is funding schemes that ensure that they are properly managed and enjoyed by as many people as possible."

The White Cliffs of Dover LP - first-round pass of £1,602,200 including £57,700 development funding

Made famous by singer Dame Vera Lynn, the White Cliffs of Dover are instantly recognisable covering 12,200ha of

chalk downland around Dover and Folkestone. A rich mosaic of habitats is found here with orchids and butterflies being particularly plentiful. The project will help protect parts of the landscape by removing scrub and maintaining grassland which in turn encourages the growth of flora and fauna. Conservation work will be undertaken on key built heritage features such as the Western Heights defensive site and remnants from World War II. Local people will be encouraged to find out more about the area with an extensive programme of activities including themed talks, demonstrations and guided walks. An education centre will also be built at Samphire Hoe, the newest part of Kent which was created from chalk marl dug out to make the Channel Tunnel.

Tees Vale and Barnard Castle LP – first-round pass of £1,999,700 including £87,200 development funding

Proposals for this project focus on a 10,000ha area of the mid Tees Valley. Characterised by farmland, ancient woodlands, small villages and country parks, the valley is known for its legacy of Roman roads, the lead mining industry, the romantic ruins of Barnard Castle and the inspiration it gave to a number of distinguished writers and artists, including Wordsworth, Dickens and Turner. This five-year conservation project will involve the community through working with local partners and encouraging people to volunteer.

Druridge Bay LP – first-round pass of £1,899,100 including £81,200 development funding

Northumberland's coastline is treasured for its beautiful beaches and rolling sand dunes. This scheme will conserve the natural features of the landscape, particularly the dune system, which is being affected by coastal erosion. Made up of a number of former pit-villages and restored open-cast coal sites, the surrounding area has high levels of social deprivation with people feeling little connection to their immediate surroundings. One of the aims of the project is to work closely with the community to help people learn more about the environment, including the local tradition of bee-keeping.

The Belfast Hills LP – first-round pass of £1,217,800 including £60,100 development funding

The area surrounding Belfast comprises 4,400ha of upland landscape; a hugely symbolic backdrop for the city. This scheme will help bring together a number of communities – the inhabitants of the rural Belfast Hills and those of the urban north and west Belfast, Lisburn, Newtownabbey and rural Antrim. The recent acquisition of the Divis and Black Mountain site along with Slievenacloy, Colin Glen and Ligoniel (all HLF-supported) has created a portfolio of projects which this scheme will help bring together into one coherent management structure. Volunteering will also play a key part in plans with walks, species surveying and visitor guiding all helping to get local people actively involved.

Mourne Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – first-round pass of £1,609,500 including £97,000 developing funding

Mourne in County Down was made internationally famous by William Percy French's song The Mountains of Mourne which he wrote in 1896. Its spectacular scenery, made up of mountains, upland heath and blanket bogs, is home to a large number of priority species including red grouse, juniper, the keeled skimmer, sundew and butterwort. The landscape bears the legacy of an industrial past involving traditional farming, granite quarrying and the construction of reservoirs. The project will focus on reconnecting people to both their natural and cultural heritage with opportunities to learn skills and take part in volunteering schemes. The management of the land will also be improved through more effective liaison with landowners.

Staffordshire Moorlands LP – first-round pass of £1,999,000 including £100,000 development funding

Churnet Valley, lying to the north east of Stoke-on-Trent, has an interesting mixture of rural landscapes and industrial quarries, limekilns, canals and railways. The scheme aims to improve land management and encourage better transport links so that visitors without access to cars can fully enjoy the 20,000ha area, which includes Weaver Hills and Ipstones Edge. Local people will learn new heritage skills such as dry stone walling and hedgelaying with the potential for both paid and voluntary job opportunities.

The Meres and Mosses LP – first-round pass of £1,055,400, including £82,400 development funding

The pastoral landscape of the Meres and Mosses is made up of glacial lakes, canals, wetlands, heathlands and small hills. Beginning at Ellesmere in Shropshire, this 17,200ha area also encompasses Malpas in Cheshire. The habitats, created in the Ice Age, are unique with hedgerow damsons being a particularly special local feature. Shropshire Wildlife Trust and its partners plan to give residents a greater insight into the importance of conserving this special area by bringing them together with landowners and environment agencies to learn more about it. An exciting range of volunteering activities will be on offer including working on professionally-led archaeological digs and monitoring habitats and species.

Clyde and Avon Valley LP – first-round pass of £2,000,000 including £100,000 development funding

The valleys of Clyde and Avon are in Scotland's central belt, covering 12,900ha of land. The rivers' gorges are home to ancient woodlands and orchards where a wonderful array of birdlife – such as warblers, bullfinches and kingfishers – can be spotted. Historically, the area was known for its fruit growing and coal and steel industries. Plans include running a programme of practical activities to encourage local volunteering. This will include woodland management, stone conservation, traditional crafts and trades and soft fruit production.

Avalon Marshes LP – first-round pass of £1,867,900 including £95,400 development funding

Somerset's Avalon Marshes include four national nature reserves, a special protection area for birds and 25 scheduled ancient monuments. This 15,300ha of land is in the Brue valley to the west of Glastonbury; it is characterised by flat open landscape, wet pasture and woodlands and prominent hills such as Glastonbury Tor (a local Celtic word meaning 'conical hill'). A large part of the project will involve maintaining appropriate water levels in the area. Traditional grazing techniques will be restored along with archaeological and peat industry features. The scheme will also encourage people to take part in volunteering and training programmes with local farmers getting involved.

The Solway Wetlands LP – first-round pass of £1,981,700, including £98,500 development funding

Covering the central portion of the Solway Coast Area of Natural Beauty (AONB), this area of north-west Cumbria is plentiful in historic, cultural and archaeological features. It includes nationally rare habitats such as salt marsh and peat bogs and a dense network of rivers, streams and ditches which are important for migratory wildfowl and wading birds as well as threatened species such as the natterjack toad. The scheme will restore and conserve different parts of the natural and built landscape, including 12 wetland sites and traditional Cumberland hedges. It will also improve access to the wetlands for visitors and those wishing to learn more about the landscape. A priority will be looking at long-term environmental initiatives such as storing carbon to help climate change and supporting the economy through the development of local produce and sustainable tourism.

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.

HLF’s Landscape Partnerships are helping bring together members of the community as well as local, regional, and national organisations to deliver schemes which benefit some of the UK’s most outstanding landscapes and rural communities. Grants range from £250,000 up to £2m.

To date, HLF has awarded £416m to over 2,785 projects for support of the UK's natural heritage.

Using money raised through the National Lottery, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) sustains and transforms a wide range of heritage for present and future generations to take part in, learn from and enjoy. From museums, parks and historic places to archaeology, natural environment and cultural traditions, we invest in every part of our diverse heritage. HLF has supported 33,900 projects, allocating £4.4billion across the UK.

Further information

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