Blackpool secures investment for Marton Mere

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Blackpool Council, The Conservation Volunteers, Blackpool Environmental Action Team (BEAT) Nature Watch group and Bourne Leisure are teaming up to develop a new visitor centre, build new and renovate existing bird hides and carry out a whole host of environmental improvements at Marton Mere Local Nature Reserve.

Marton Mere is the only designated Local Nature Reserve (LNR) and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) within the town and is nationally recognised for its bird populations.

It also supports a number of other regionally important species such otters, dragonflies, butterflies and orchids.

The funding will help safeguard the variety and quality of site's ecosystems and biodiversity and make the reserve more accessible. A project manager will also be allocated to the reserve to oversee the works and encourage the local community to get involved as well as develop volunteer and education programmes. The three-year project is set to begin in January 2014 and volunteers are now being urged to get involved.

Cllr Graham Cain, Blackpool Council's cabinet member for leisure and tourism, said: "Securing this funding will help to safeguard, protect and improve Marton Mere for decades to come."As well as providing an important habitat for wildlife including rare species, it is also an extremely positive educational and ecological resource for Blackpool."

And Kath Godfrey, from The Conservation Volunteers, added: "People often don't realise there is an incredible eco-system and wildlife habitat right here on the doorstep in Blackpool. What we want to do now we've secured the funding is work together with the local community, including everyone from schools to community groups, to help improve it. We'll be reaching out to local groups to ask for their input and I hope lots of people will want to get involved in this very exciting project."

Sara Hilton, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund North West, said: "Today's HLF support will help protect and enhance the wealth of natural heritage, including many rare species, at Marton Mere. As the largest green space in Blackpool, this project will not only help boost the area's biodiversity but by developing the site as an educational resource, local people and visitors will have a fantastic range of opportunities to get involved and take care of this important landscape for many years to come."

As well as the new visitor centre – which Bourne Leisure have allowed to be sited on the fringe of the Marton Mere Holiday Village site – and improvements to the hides, there will also be a whole host of other work taking place. Entrances will be upgraded and made more welcoming and the footpath network will be refurbished to create safe and secure access for visitors and enable wheelchair access.

A significant amount of specialist reed, scrub and grassland habitat management work will take place as well as the creation of special feeding and nesting habitats for waders and skylarks. Vegetation clearance and pond works will also take place, helping to restore former orchid habitats and create better conditions for amphibians to flourish. A comprehensive range of new education and training programmes as well as an interesting programme of events, will also be funded from the grant.

Further information

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