Mendip Hills AONB secures Heritage Lottery Fund investment

15/01/2013

The project will safeguard the future of the Black Down and Burrington Commons by encouraging greater understanding of the heritage landscapes, wildlife and archaeology of this special site.

The grant, part of a funding package totaling £282,800, will employ a full-time project officer for three years to deliver the project working with community groups and partner organisations.

The project will engage local communities and visitors to the site through a range of new interpretation, learning and participation activities. It will also develop new volunteering and training opportunities for a wider range of people to gain skills and get involved in protecting the commons for the future.

Alongside these works the AONB aims to carry out work to restore and repair badly eroded paths, as well as protecting the area's wildlife habitats and archaeology.

Large areas of Black Down are designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for its valuable wildlife habitats and has three Scheduled Monuments dating from the late Stone Age and Bronze Age through to the Second World War. In recent years the increase in visitor numbers using the site for a variety of recreational activities, and who are largely unaware of the heritage value, has resulted in problems of erosion and damage to specific features and the site in general.

The project has been developed by the AONB Partnership through the Black Down Advisory Group (BDAG) consisting of the landowner, Burrington Conservators, Mendip Hills AONB Unit and central and local government bodies who liased with local communities and users of the site at all stages and Natural England have contributed partnership funding to the project.

The legacy of Discovering Black Down will be to create a sustainable structure that will ensure local community and user group volunteers continue to play an active role in the care and conservation of this area's heritage.

Councillor Dawn Hill, Chairman of the AONB Partnership, said: "We're delighted that the Heritage Lottery Fund has given us this grant. Black Down is one of the most fascinating sites in the Mendip Hills AONB and with this funding we can bring the special stories of the site to life and encourage people to take an active role in caring for this special place.

Richard Bellamy, Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: "We at the Heritage Lottery Fund are proud to be supporting a project which will stimulate people's interest in nature. Through the Discovering Black Down project, the local community will have the chance to learn new skills, discover new passions and play their part as custodians of our wonderful natural heritage."

Notes to editors

The Mendip Hills is a place of such scenic quality that it was designated an Area of Outstanding natural beauty in 1972. The designation recognises that the Mendip Hills is one of England's finest landscapes, an area treasured by

everyone with special protection and management.

Further information

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