Multi-million pound boost to for New Forest National Park

30/10/2013

A £2.9m HLF Landscape Partnership grant has been earmarked for the National Park to restore lost habitats, develop Forest skills and inspire a new generation to champion and care for the New Forest.

The seven-year New Forest Landscape Partnership will be led by the New Forest National Park Authority and 10 key partners, who will contribute their own funding to increase the pot to £4.5m.

The aim is to make the forest more robust and able to withstand modern day pressures such as trends in agriculture, climate change, and increasing demands from a growing population that is less connected to the countryside.

The funding will help restore ancient woodland, grassland, meadows, waterways and historic buildings, protecting the area's special qualities formed over a thousand years thanks to a unique system of land management based on commoning rights.

As well as practical measures, the project will develop a shared understanding and enthusiasm for the area between commoners, landowners, local communities and visitors, particularly around the edges of the forest. The three key programmes of the project will include:

- restoring lost landscapes by helping landowners manage neglected woodlands, creating wildlife corridors through hedgerow planting, conserving the forest fringe against urban creep and restoring the New Forest's archaeology and historic buildings
- enhancing traditional forest skills among landowners, develop a New Forest Ranger apprenticeship scheme and encourage new and young Commoners
- inspiring a new generation to discover forest heritage by developing an e-cadamy for sharing knowledge, improve educational facilities at the National Trust's Foxbury Estate, and restoring the historic Verderers Court in Lyndhurst – the oldest functioning court in the land and a building central to the commoning community

The New Forest is only one of two areas in the south east to be selected for the funding this year, and only one of nine across the country.

The full details of the programmes will be developed over the next 18 months by the National Park Authority and its key partners including the National Trust, Forestry Commission, Commoners Defence Association, Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust, New Forest Land Advice Service, Beaulieu Estate, New Forest Centre, Cadland Estate, Environment Agency and Natural England.

Local communities will also be consulted through parish councils and local interest groups about how the project will be developed.

National Park Authority member, Marian Spain, said: "This is wonderful news for the forest. We and our partners have been working together to protect and enhance the special qualities of this unique area on a number of small projects such as the "Better Boundaries" scheme which creates wildlife corridors to connect the forest with the Avon Valley. Now

this Heritage Lottery Fund grant means that we can carry out work across the whole National Park to enhance its special landscapes and protect the wildlife that so many people who live here and visit the forest enjoy."

Graham Ferris, Chairman of the Commoners Defence Association, said: "We welcome the positive response from the HLF and look forward to working with partners to draw up and implement detailed projects. The funding will be of benefit to the New Forest generally and specifically commoning with projects focussing on the area fringing the common lands, resisting creeping urbanisation, preserving traditional skills, providing training and support for young commoners and inspiring local communities, especially the younger generation with a passionate understanding of the unique cultural heritage and landscapes of a working forest."

Michael Seddon, Deputy Surveyor of the Forestry Commission, said: ‘We are delighted to hear of the success of the bid, and the potential to fund aspirations within the New Forest that might otherwise be unachievable. The Forestry Commission is particularly excited about the opportunity to restore certain heritage aspects such as the Verderers' Court, enabling it to be opened up to the public and ensuring that its historic features can be enjoyed by all."

Paul Cook, General Manager of Mottisfont and New Forest at National Trust, said: ‘We are delighted the consortium’s HLF bid is successful. It will enable us to take a big step forward to fulfil a whole host of conservation, educational and recreational objectives across the New Forest that will benefit the communities who live, work and visit, for a very long time."

Stuart McLeod, Head of HLF South East, said: ‘The New Forest, one of the South East’s most distinctive landscapes, is well-known for its unique system of “commoning” rights and strong community spirit. Sadly, both the countryside and its accompanying way of life are now under increasing pressures and if urgent action isn’t taken their future could be threatened. The Heritage Lottery Fund has been extremely impressed with the partnerships’ imaginative plans which involve essential conservation work in conjunction with a comprehensive programme of education and training opportunities for residents and visitors."

Notes to editors

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 £100,000 to £3m. The next closing date for LP applications is May 2014 for decisions in October 2014.

A Landscape Partnership (LP) earmarked grant means that money has been set aside by HLF for the scheme in question. The applicant then progresses to the second round and submits a further, fully-developed application to secure the full award.

New Forest National Park facts

- It covers 220 square miles (569 square kilometres), making it the smallest national park in the UK
- 56% of the National Park is designated of international value for nature conservation
- The National Park has 214 Scheduled Ancient Monuments, 622 listed buildings and 20 designated Conservation Areas
- The New Forest is a major recreational resource with over 325 km of Public Rights of Way and over 3,000 hectares of land accessible by the public (over 50% of the area of the National Park)
- It is home to more than 34,000 people and is under intense pressure from development in surrounding areas

- 13.5million visitor days are spent per year in the National Park.

Further information

HLF press office: Katie Owen on 020 7591 6036, mobile: 07973 613 820

New Forest National Park: Sion Donovan on 01590 646 639 / 07876 898 103, email: sion.donovan@newforestnpa.gov.uk.

You might also be interested in...

Nine precious landscapes to be restored