The New Year brings good news of lottery funding for the North East's coastline!

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Thanks to an award of £135,700 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), marine scientists will be able to see if there have been any changes to the local marine species and environment.

The project named 'The Big Sea Survey' will record species numbers on the shoreline. By looking at the scarcity or abundance of certain species, scientists will be able to learn more about the ecology of the wider marine environment. The findings will be used to make decisions about how this valuable coast line is managed in the future and how best to encourage the existing species to grow and develop in their natural environment.

Head of the Heritage Lottery Fund in the North East, Ivor Crowther, said: "With people becoming more and more aware of 'green' issues and climate change we must all do our bit to ensure that our environment is preserved for the future. The North East coastline is of great importance not only to the region, but nationally as well. By recording the marine life that inhabits the area, we can find out how the climate is changing and what we can do to help. The Big Sea Survey is also a great way to get local communities involved; volunteers will play a big part in this project, learning about their natural environment. HLF are looking forward to seeing the results of this worthwhile project."

This year marks the international year of biodiversity so this is a great time to see what fascinating nature lies all around us and how we can sustain it. Specialised training will be taking place in the local community, including species monitoring and team bio-diversity days, where volunteers and local schools will work with the the university collecting data from across the coastline. This training will offer the volunteers a great opportunity to get some hands on experience, learn some new skills and get out into their surroundings to enjoy all nature has to offer.

Dr Jane Delany of the Dove Marine Laboratory, Newcastle University, said: "Our coastline and our seas belong to all of us. It is important to recognise we all have a part to play, and that the marine environment is not remote and inaccessible. This project is an excellent way for everyone to get involved in ensuring that the wealth of marine species and habitats will be here for future generations to enjoy."

The Big Sea Survey will result in a comprehensive collection of data about current species in the area. This data will then be used to find ways of maintaining and preserving the species and the coastline itself. The coastline is of huge importance not only to the animals who call it home but also to bird watchers, surfers and walkers so it is important that it is maintained. The project will work in conjunction with key partners including Northumberland AONB, Natural England, RSPB and Newcastle University to ensure this impressive piece of landscape is kept for future generations to enjoy.

Notes to editors

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 with £209 million in the North East alone.

Further information

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