‘A Forgotten Landscape’ partnership project

Forgotten landscape

The Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) today announced that a partnership of private and public organisations, hosted by South Gloucestershire Council has been granted £1,017,200 for the 3.5 year Landscape Partnership project ‘A Forgotten Landscape’.

The project will start in January 2015 and aims to restore the heritage of part of the Lower Severn Vale Levels - a term used to describe the coastal region alongside the Severn Estuary between Avonmouth and Lawrence Weston in Bristol and the county boundary with Gloucestershire.

The term ‘heritage’ is used in its widest sense and encompasses the natural environment, archaeology, local history, local food production and traditional farming practices. Historic and modern-day transportation facilities such as the ferry at Aust, the two Severn bridges and the community railway from Temple Meads to Severn Beach are also within the project’s scope.

The project will restore a range of wildlife habitats across the area to benefit its rich array of wildlife, including wetlands, hedges, wildflower grassland and orchards. It will also help communities and people interact with the natural heritage of the Levels and Estuary through a range of volunteer programmes including wildlife identification classes, training in traditional skills such as coppicing, pollarding and hedge-laying and the promotion of traditional practices such as salt

marsh grazing and cider making. The project will also provide new learning opportunities for school children and wider age groups and aims to increase public access to the Levels landscape by rail, bike and on foot, advertising and promoting its heritage features for people and communities living in the area and outside it.

The Lower Severn Vale Levels have a unique and magical character. Once forming part of the wider Somerset and Avon Levels, over the centuries they have become cut off by the expansion of the city of Bristol, industrial development in Avonmouth, and motorway construction. The area has a varied history, a rich diversity of habitats and landscape and a sense of remoteness and tranquillity which belies its proximity to the dense, urban environment of the city.

Savita Custead, Chair of the Partnership, said: “It’s wonderful news and we’re absolutely thrilled that the Heritage Lottery Fund has awarded us this grant. It is a beautiful and distinctive landscape with a long, fascinating history of human interaction with it and the funding will ensure that both local communities and visitors to the area can help conserve, enjoy and learn about the area’s rich heritage”.

Nerys Watts, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund South West, said: “Over the past decade, we’ve had great success with our Landscape Partnership Schemes, especially in the South West, and many threatened landscapes are already on the road to a more secure future. Supporting projects such as ‘A Forgotten Landscape’ is particularly important for us at HLF as they bring together both community groups and public bodies with a shared passion of caring for our incredible natural environment.

“Today’s HLF investment for this historically significant landscape will not only strengthen those partnerships but also capture the enthusiasm of local communities and help reconnect them with this wonderful slice of nature.”

Notes to editors

About the Forgotten Landscape Partnership
The scheme will be orchestrated and delivered by a project team and the strategic partners within the Landscape Partnership consisting of South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol City Council, Natural England, The Environment Agency, FWAG South West, Avon Wildlife Trust, RSPB, Bristol Regional Environmental Records Centre, The Conservation Volunteers, University of the West of England and a Community Representative.

The project also includes a wider partnership of primary schools, parish councils, local history and community groups and businesses such as National Grid and Magnox.

Further information

Bristol Natural History Consortium: Savita Custead, Chief Executive on 0117 317 8751, email: savita@bnhc.org.uk.

South Gloucestershire Council: Strategic Communications on 01454 863 200, email: strategiccommunications@southglos.gov.uk.

Natural England: Amanda Grundy, Lead Adviser on 07900 608 311, email: amanda.grundy@naturalengland.org.uk.

UWE: Steve Poole, Professor of History and Heritage on 0117 328 4437, email: steve.poole@uwe.ac.uk.

HLF press office: Laura Bates on 020 7591 6027, email: lbates@hlf.org.uk.