A Wild Welcombe to Lottery grant for source of



Welcombe Hills and Clopton Park Nature Reserve

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (WKWT) will use the grant, along with £2,000 from Stratford District Council, to transform the way Welcombe Hills and Clopton Park Nature Reserve's history and natural surroundings can be explored.

The 12-month project, called A Wild Welcombe, will see the Trust team up with young people from Playbox Theatre, based in Warwick, to create a brand new audio trail and interpretation boards. Starring the young theatre members, the audio trail will be available for download and through an app to lead visitors around the reserve's natural and archaeological features, breathing life into the historical narrative and folklores behind them.

While the area has strong Shakespearian connections, they are not the only stories the reserve has to tell. The trail and boards will also cover topics including the Clopton family, a number of listed historical structures, ancient trees and a variety of plants and wildlife – information which is currently not available for visitors.

Young participants will take on the role of researchers, writers and performers. As well as gaining transferable skills in radio scripting and sound engineering, they will also work closely with local history enthusiasts from the Shakespeare Birthplace Trust, Stratford-upon-Avon Library and the Stratford Society who will share their knowledge and passion for the area's rich history. In keeping with the Trust's commitment to encouraging a love of nature, the majority of the project will take place outside and be closely linked to the natural surroundings.

WKWT are currently successfully carrying out two other HLF-funded projects, one to improve and conserve the landscape of Tame Valley and the A Wilder Career Choice project which provides trainees with a range of practical skills essential for the effective management of wildlife habitats.

Reyahn King, Head of HLF West Midlands, said: “We’re delighted to support this project through our Young Roots programme and it’s a welcome addition to the work they’re already doing in their other HLF-funded projects. Young people are the future custodians of our heritage and it’s fantastic to see Playbox Theatre members taking such a central role in creating an engaging gateway into the relatively unknown history of the nature reserve and surrounding area.”

Project co-ordinators, Youth Engagement Officer Matt Cox and Wildlife Engagement Officer Ben Devine, will also support those involved to develop their own set of activities to unlock the stories behind ten different historical features.

Matt said: “I am very pleased that we have received the funding from HLF. This project represents something quite different from what the Trust has done before, but I think the superb partnerships we have created with Playbox Theatre and the local history groups will set us up for a great success and a really exciting opportunity for young people in the area to create a high-quality audio trail that will really add value and interest to the area.”

To find out more about natural heritage and the support HLF is giving in the West Midlands, get involved in their Natural Heritage Takeover Week starting 12 January. Log onto Twitter using #NaturalHeritageQA, and join in the live Twitter Q&A with Drew Bennellick, HLF Head of Landscape and Natural Heritage UK, who will be ready to answer questions about all things natural heritage!

Notes to editors

About Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

Warwickshire Wildlife Trust is the leading local environmental charity which works for people and wildlife in Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull. It is a voluntary membership organisation supported by more than 23,000 members and 500 volunteers. It promotes a better natural environment for local wildlife and local people as part of its aim to create a living landscape in the West Midlands where wildlife and local people can live and thrive together. The Trust looks after 56 nature reserves across our region. For more information see the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust website.

About The Wildlife Trusts

There are 47 individual Wildlife Trusts covering the whole of the UK. All are working for an environment rich in wildlife for everyone. We have more than 800,000 members including 150,000 members of our junior branch Wildlife Watch. Our vision is to create A Living Landscape and secure Living Seas. We manage 2,256 nature reserves covering more than 90,000 hectares and every year we advise thousands of landowners and organisations on how to manage their land for wildlife. We also run marine conservation projects around the UK, collecting vital data on the state of our seas and celebrating our amazing marine wildlife. Every year we work with thousands of schools and our nature reserves and visitor centres receive millions of visitors. Each Wildlife Trust is working within its local communities to inspire people about the future of their area: their own Living Landscapes and Living Seas.

About Playbox Theatre

Playbox Theatre was founded in 1986 by director Mary King. It exists to provide young people and developing artists a unique environment for training, creation and exploration in theatre and related artistic forms. Playbox believes

passionately in the evolution of a strong artistic network regardless of age, experience, social, religious and cultural backgrounds.