

Miller-Smith family at RSPB Minsmere Peter Everard Smith

Today, the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF) is bringing together an invited audience of senior heritage and disability leaders to stimulate joined-up thinking and encourage more applications from disability-led groups. The results of this debate will help inform HLF's work and stronger, more ambitious partnerships in the future.

Prompted by the 20th anniversary of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA), HLF's Inclusive Heritage Conference will challenge change-makers to address the under-representation of disabled people in shaping, visiting and working within the heritage sector. It will look at achievements to date as well as improvements for the future.

Sir Peter Luff, Chair of HLF, said: "We must raise the bar when it comes to making our heritage more inclusive. Today's conference is not an exercise in 'box-ticking'. It actually signals one of our most important aspirations: ensuring that everyone has the opportunity to be involved in the nation's heritage. There is no room for complacency and we know we have to do better.

"We must reach out across boundaries and never forget that money raised through the National Lottery, which HLF spends, belongs to everyone and should benefit everyone."

Two exemplary HLF projects – BBC Spring Watch location RSPB Minsmere in Suffolk and the Foundling Museum in London's Bloomsbury – will feature in a film shown to conference delegates. Both these places demonstrate that true access is achieved not just by making physical adjustments but also, more importantly, by making every visitor,

whatever their requirements, feel welcomed and able to fully participate.

Dr Tom Shakespeare, Senior Lecturer at the University of East Anglia, will deliver the conference's key note speech on 'State of the Disability Nation', reminding people that throughout history disabled people have inspired others to build a better world. He commented: "Disabled people have such a lot to share with others, with non-disabled people. In a rapidly changing world, disabled people are the experts in readjustment, in adapting to the curve balls that life pitches at us."

Conference delegates, including HLF staff, will be asked to pledge a specific action to develop inclusive heritage. These will be publically shared on HLF's website in December.

Notes to editors

To date, HLF has awarded £34m to 800 projects specifically aimed at benefiting people with disabilities. £17.9m has been awarded to 350 projects led by organisations representing the interests of people with disabilities.

Recent HLF awards include: £853,600 for Shape Arts to create a digital archive documenting the history of the Disability Arts Movement since its inception in the 1970s; and £878,500 for Accentuate to run a three-year project called History of Place which will investigate and animate eight important built heritage sites.

Further information

Please contact Katie Owen, HLF press office, on tel: 020 7591 6036, Mobile: 07973 613 820.