

Elan Valley

The Elan Valley project joins the Living Levels and Clwydian Range and Dee Valley projects as recipients of this HLF funding. All are recognised as areas of great beauty – and they all have the potential to use their natural landscapes and wildlife, distinctive buildings, local traditions and stories and even industrial archaeology to increase tourism and boost jobs through carefully planned conservation and renovation activity.

Thanks to National Lottery players, the multi-million pound investment will protect these landscapes as well as inspiring local people and organisations to come together to develop the full economic potential bringing increased prosperity and other regeneration benefits to the countryside.

This significant funding will give people at the heart of these rural communities the power to play an active role in deciding how these extraordinary places will be looked after and managed for their benefit in the future. The latest investment will see 3,000 training opportunities created, as well as a similar amount of volunteering opportunities.

Making the announcement, Richard Bellamy, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Wales, said: “Our stunning landscapes define the very character of Wales and are as much a part of who we are as our castles, language and rugby. They are as much loved by the people who call Wales home as by tens of thousands of tourists who visit them.

“These fragile places must be conserved. However, if carefully managed, our landscape and countryside can also play a vital role in growing our nation’s economy.

“Thanks to National Lottery players we now have the chance to support three stunning areas, each with their own individual character and rich man-made heritage. They will now be looked after in a holistic and appropriate manner, harnessing their economic potential to the benefit of everyone who lives and works there.”

The funding has been provided through HLF’s Landscape Partnership programme, which provides grants for schemes aiming to conserve areas of distinctive landscape character.

Tourism is crucial to the Elan Valley and surrounding area’s economy, with over 150,000 visitors enjoying the spectacular scenery annually. While safeguarding local species and habitats, the funding will enable the project to engage more effectively with tourists and local people alike, ensuring a full appreciation of the area’s diverse beauty and its important water function.

Eluned Lewis the Project Development Manager explains: “The story of the Elan Valley is perhaps now an old one to many – but it is important that we don’t forget the significant and irreversible impact that the damning had on the area and its inhabitants when the valley was flooded in 1896 to provide water for Birmingham. Our project will ensure this connection between Wales and Birmingham – where water runs almost as a lifeline to the city – is kept alive and that communities today appreciate this bond and the lifeblood given by Elan Valley to thousands of people.

“It is fantastic that the Heritage Lottery Fund recognises the importance of safeguarding our landscapes and we can now move forward to ensure the story of the Elan Valley will be conserved for future generations.”

Dr Ieuan Joyce, Chair of the Elan Valley Trust, said: “This award recognises the importance of the landscape of the Elan Valley to local people, to our many visitors, and to the people who drink the clean, pure water produced here.

“The Elan Valley is home to an internationally significant feat of Victorian civil engineering and the wild nature-rich landscape has been created over centuries by extensive farming systems. Local farmers still use these systems today.

“I am pleased that the Elan Valley Trust will match the HLF award with an additional £0.8m because we see the benefits that a large and co-ordinated investment will have for the future. The trust is passionate about the fantastic natural, built and cultural heritage of the Elan Valley. The opportunity we now have is to work with HLF, local people and all who care about Elan to secure this heritage for the future and to build on the benefits people get from Elan over the long term.”

Welcoming the announcement today, the Welsh Government’s Minister for Natural Resources, Carl Sargeant, said: “These areas are being rightly recognised, not only for their beauty but for the significant role they play in representing the ‘Wales’ people think of and love – and come to visit. The support awarded by the Heritage Lottery Fund will allow these areas to flourish from an environmental perspective, but the areas will also be able to reap increased economic benefits from tourists and business too through new jobs being created and significant training opportunities.”

Notes to editors

About the Landscape Partnership programme

HLF’s Landscape Partnership programme – which has now been running for over a decade - is the most significant grant scheme available for landscape-scale projects. Across the UK, £146m has been invested in 86 different areas helping forge new partnerships between public and community bodies and ensuring people are better equipped to understand and tackle the needs of their local landscapes.

Elan Links – People, Nature & Water (£1,713,300)

Elan lies at the heart of the Cambrian Mountains in Mid Wales. Its unique landscape combines remote hill land, isolated farmsteads, steep-sided wooded valleys and an extraordinary feat of Victorian engineering that brought clean water to the then rapidly expanding industrial city of Birmingham. Today, Elan's 20,000 hectares - 1% of Wales - is a haven for wildlife and people. Its 154,000 visitors a year enjoy the breath-taking scenery, nature, recreational facilities and extensive free educational resources for schools, families and communities. The project's vision is to further develop all aspects of this special place to benefit people, as well as the environment itself.

Clwydian Range and Dee Valley (£1,382,300)

The project centres on the landscape of the Dee Valley and the Pontcysyllte Aqueduct and Canal World Heritage Site, and is focussing on the journeys that have been, and continue to be, a key feature of the area which is cut by the canal, Telford's A5 and the River Dee. Visitors have drawn inspiration from this beautiful valley in art and poetry since the 18th century, and it continues to captivate tourists in search of the 'sublime' to this day. But this landscape is under extreme pressure, with high numbers of visitors drawn to what are often its most fragile sites. The communities on its doorstep, born from the area's industrial past, are now less connected to the benefits the landscape offers. The five-year project will invest in key visitor sites and engage communities living locally, while reinterpreting this rich landscape for a new generation.

Living Levels Partnership (£2,865,300)

The Gwent Levels is a South Wales estuarine landscape, rich in both historical and natural heritage. Reclaimed from the sea in Roman times, the land is a criss-crossed network of fertile fields and historic watercourses, known locally as reens. This unassuming yet appealing landscape of high skies and low horizons lends it its status as one of the finest examples of a 'natural' landscape really crafted by people in Europe; and one of the largest tracts of bio-diverse wet grassland left in the UK. Living Levels formally brings together like-minded stakeholders to work together to collectively restore, enhance and protect the historic area for all to enjoy. The Living Levels is a partnership that will work with the local communities and farmers of the Gwent Wildlife Trust. The Partners are: Royal Society for the Protection of Birds (RSPB), Gwent Wildlife Trust (GWT), Natural Resources Wales (NRW), Newport City Council (NCC), Monmouthshire County Council (MCC), Cardiff City Council (CC), Rick Turner OBE, Cardiff Story Museum, Sustrans, National Trust, Bumblebee Conservation Trust, Buglife.

Further information

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