

Heather moorlands GX Megson

People and communities in Nidderdale will have the chance to reconnect with the natural heritage on their doorstep, and to make a more meaningful and more useful contribution to conserving the world around them, thanks to National Lottery players.

The Nidderdale Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is a nationally significant landscape, incorporating striking wildlife habitats and a remarkable variety of species. The heather moorlands of the AONB are internationally important for conservation because of their rich concentration of rare plants and wildlife, and the area also includes cultural heritage sites such as Fountains Abbey and the Studley Royal World Heritage sites.

The citizen science project will gather data relating to the habitats and wildlife of Nidderdale, engage people with nature, and create natural heritage action plans for nationally threatened wildlife species. It will help communities to get involved in their local natural heritage in lots of different ways, whether that is hedgehog spotting, surveying rare plants or learning new skills in natural history and nature conservation. Local people and visitors to the area will be able to have an enjoyable experience, learn something new and feel more connected to nature.

The project has the potential to make a real difference, both to species in the area and for the communities themselves. The data collected will help the team to understand how they can take targeted conservation action to best affect, and help protect the future of much-loved species, once a common sight but now increasingly threatened and rare.

Fiona Spiers, Head of Heritage Lottery Fund Yorkshire and the Humber, said: “This wonderful project will allow significant numbers of people to really get to grips with the natural world in their local area, which so often goes undiscovered. It is also fantastic that the important species and habitats in the AONB will be conserved, so we are delighted to be able to provide our support”.

[quote=Paul Burgess, Nidderdale AONB Manager]"It will combine the power of citizen science and emerging scientific research to gather natural heritage records and ultimately pioneer a new way of delivering conservation action on a landscape scale”[/quote]

Paul Burgess, Nidderdale AONB Manager, said: “We are really pleased that the Heritage Lottery Fund is supporting us to develop this innovative and exciting project. It will combine the power of citizen science and emerging scientific research to gather natural heritage records and ultimately pioneer a new way of delivering conservation action on a landscape scale”.

An HLF first round pass grant of £15,000 has now been awarded to help progress the project through its early development stages, which will see the overall plans take shape in consultation with the local community.

2016 promises to be a bumper year for natural heritage in Yorkshire, as this news follows hard on the heels of the launch of the HLF’s ‘Yorkshire’s Back Garden’ campaign which is promoting funding for natural heritage projects throughout the region over the next year and a half. The campaign is particularly targeting local groups to help raise awareness of wildlife and nature to be found close to home – in back gardens and local neighbourhoods in both urban and rural locations.

Further information

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Barn overlooking Gouthwaite Reservoir Janina Holubecki

Hedgerows, heather and hedgehogs in Nidderdale