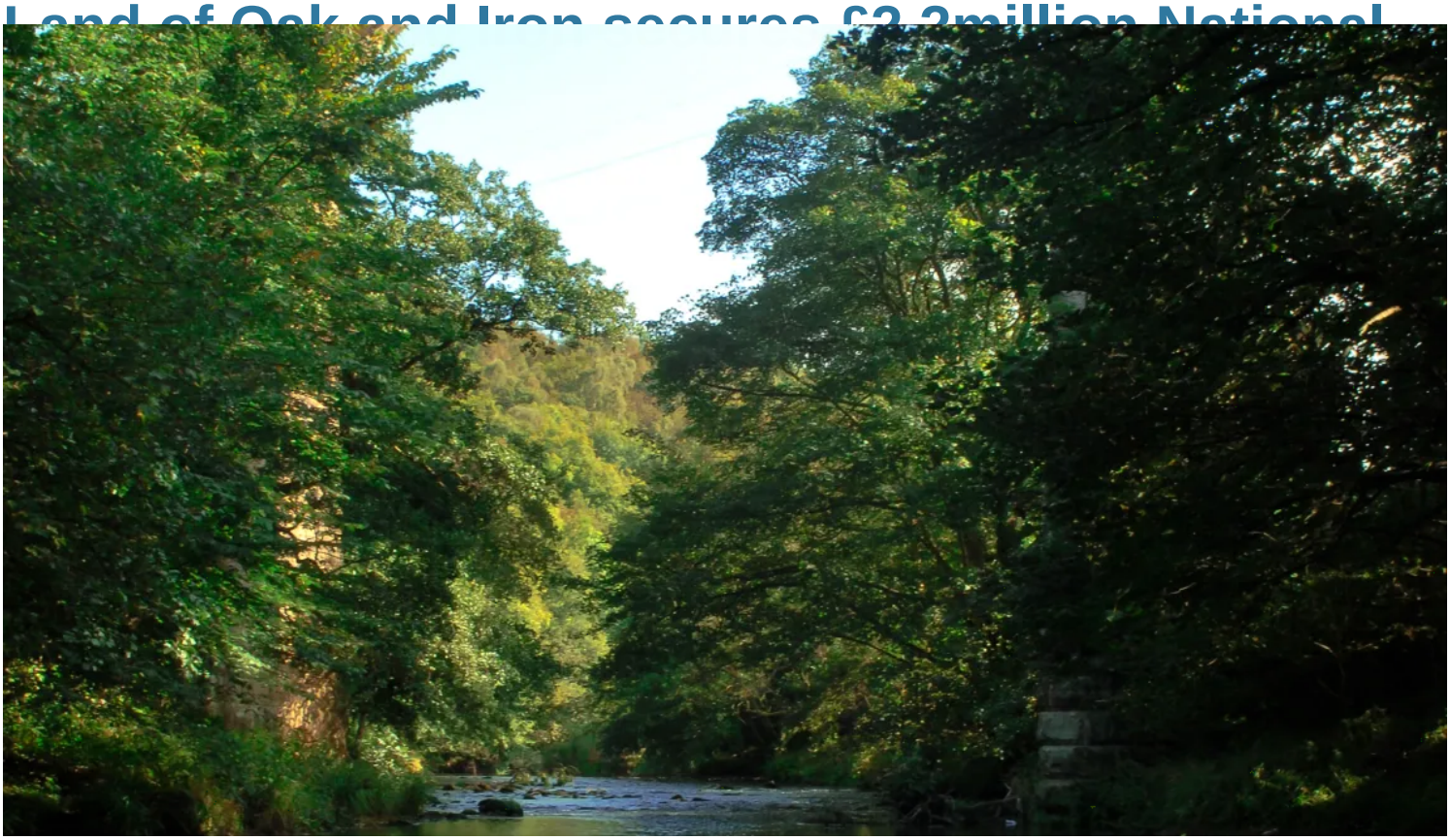
Land of Oak and Iron secures £2.3million National



Derwent Valley's Nine Arches is one of the sites the project will focus on

The Land of Oak and Iron project focuses on the Derwent Valley and the surrounding area - from Derwent Reservoir to the River Tyne and includes Consett, Rowlands Gill, Winlaton and Prudhoe - which has a fascinating industrial heritage of pioneering ironworks, steel furnaces and sword making.

A Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership, headed by social enterprise Groundwork North East and Cumbria, has been formed and will have three main themes:

- **Investing in heritage:** rediscovering lost landscapes: identifying, enhancing and managing the natural and industrial heritage
- **Investing in people:** forging a stronger future from the past: investing in people to develop skills, learning about the heritage and organising volunteering times
- **Investing in communities:** creating a legacy: Improving access to and interpretation of the heritage, expanding engagement and ownership, while promoting the area as a place to live, work and visit.

The Land of Oak and Iron Landscape Partnership also includes Gateshead Council, Durham and Northumberland County Councils plus, DEFRA agencies, Pont Valley Network, North East Cultural Partnership, Durham Wildlife Trust, SCA Hygiene and publicrelationsconsultancy.com.

Delivery of the £3.4m scheme, which will start next year and run until 2020, will encompass:

- Restoring and interpreting the few surviving traces of the area's heritage including the remains of Crowley's Ironworks at Winlaton Mill, Whinfield Coke Ovens near Highfield, Derwentcote Steel Furnace in Durham and Allensford Blast Furnace in Northumberland
- Re-instating natural features to their former glory including enhancing and protecting ancient woodland, restoring the river and conserving wildlife
- Organising community archaeology schemes and educational activities for local schoolchildren, which will provide opportunities to learn the story of the Land of Oak and Iron
- Establishing a skills initiative for young people and volunteers
- Reviving cultural activities such as Rapper Dancing, and tales of heroes and villains
- Establishing a Land of Oak and Iron Community Grants scheme

Partnership chairman John Rundle, said: "This is tremendous news for the area. None of this would have been possible without the hard work and effort put in by all the partners, staff, local residents, community organisations and business support. A very sincere thank you to HLF, and to everyone involved in building this project.

"This is just the start for the Land of Oak and Iron. We look forward to working even more closely with the local community and businesses to help create the opportunities and activities that will help preserve our local heritage, and create a lasting enjoyable legacy that brings longer term benefit to the area. If people want to find out more, or get involved we would encourage them to get in touch with us now."

Kate Culverhouse, Chief Executive, Groundwork North East and Cumbria, said: "This major project will celebrate the area's rich heritage and provide significant investment for the area for training, and volunteering that will deliver local economic benefits and boost tourism. The aim is to inspire passion and interest in the Land of Oak and Iron, which played such an important part in shaping the area's natural and industrial landscape."

Ivor Crowther, Head of HLF North East, said: "With a rich industrial heritage which harnessed the power of the River Derwent and made use of the area's wealth of natural resources, Derwent Valley has an incredible story to tell. Thanks to National Lottery players, we're delighted to support this project to celebrate that story, conserve its heritage and create a passionate and skilled partnership between organisations and the local community to ensure a bright future for this historic landscape."

Match funding will be secured from a variety of sources including the government, European Union support, grant aid, private sector sponsorship, in-kind donations of time and crowd funding.

People interested in learning more or becoming involved with the Land of Oak & Iron Project should contact Vicky Cuthbertson on tel: 01207 524 800 or visit the Land of Oak and Iron website.

Notes to editors

Groundwork North East and Cumbria is a social enterprise/charity dedicated to improving the lives of people across the North of England.

This includes:

- Helping people to retrain, gain confidence and gain valuable work experience

- Taking practical action to tackle climate change – it recognises that by doing so it can also reduce fuel poverty and help business be more efficient
- Owning and managing buildings and land in every part of the North of England
- Enhancing the places where people live, work and play

Further information

For more information contact Helen Logan on tel:01325 363436.