

Gwarchodfa Natur Gilfach

Tasked with improving our hedgerows, collecting valuable habitat information and encouraging young people to take an interest in nature, the projects will share close to £1million and between them will span the length and breadth of the country – from Anglesey to Monmouthshire, Flint to Pembrokeshire.

Richard Bellamy, Head of HLF in Wales, explains what he hopes funding more projects like these in Wales will achieve: “Coming hot on the heels of Wales Biodiversity Week these fantastic projects are looking to provide a better place for us to inhabit in Wales, by protecting our threatened species, plants and natural features and inviting people to join in with that process.”

“When people think of what ‘heritage’ means, they often think of grand old buildings like castles and rolling estates. But Wales is lucky enough to also encompass some beautiful landscapes and natural environments that are home to rare and precious species. By funding natural heritage projects like The Long Forest and Exploring Gilfach, we hope more people will realise that looking after our landscape – perhaps starting in our very own back gardens – is just as important.”

Traditional hedgerows are recognised as vital habitats for wildlife but their decline in recent years has threatened the existence of many of our well known native species, such as dormice, red squirrels and bats, who use the hedges for foraging and navigating. The Long Forest project, managed by Keep Wales Tidy and The Woodland Trust, will see 100,000 trees planted and around 120,000 metres of hedgerow improved; good news indeed for our furry and feathered

friends.

Richard Phipps from Keep Wales Tidy explains why this project is so important: “An interconnected network of hedgerows shapes the character of much our cherished landscapes. However, they are an undervalued resource at severe risk from neglect, damage and removal – and it is now vital that action is taken.

“Thanks to support from HLF, we can also develop an innovative app that will help us improve the information we have about the current conditions of hedgerows in Wales by enabling people to survey and record hedgerows near them.”

Working with local people and community groups like Mid Powys Mind, the Exploring Gilfach project run by the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust will improve walking trails and facilities at the 410 acre reserve, providing a better experience to visitors who can learn more about the history of the site as well as its environmental significance.

Already designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest, Gilfach is home to some species not found anywhere else in the UK, as well as otters, leaping salmon and a variety of summer migrant birds including wood warblers, redstarts and pied flycatchers. As part of the project volunteers and budding young naturalists will gain professional-level skills in identifying different species – and with around 1,300 species on site, they’ve plenty to choose from!

Darylle Hardy from the Radnorshire Wildlife Trust has worked on bringing the project to fruition, and explains why taking care of the site is vital: “Gilfach is an internationally important site, well-known amongst experts for its huge variety of lichen species. Visitors don’t always notice them, but studies have shown some lichen species contain compounds with the potential to cure harmful diseases that affect humans – so understanding, protecting and enhancing our local biodiversity could have huge implications for current and future human health.”

Thanks to National Lottery players, HLF is helping to protect and share natural heritage in Wales. From restoring threatened habitats to helping people explore and study nature on their doorstep, HLF is supporting projects that have a huge impact on our natural environment.

To find out how we can help you look after your environment and apply for grants from £3,000, please contact the Wales team.

Further information

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