Wildlife Trust to open nature reserve next to new



A visual of Skew Bridge Lake with the planned retail and visitor centre in the background LXB

Visitors to the Rushden Lakes shopping centre when it opens in Spring 2017 will be able to enjoy nature while they shop, thanks to National Lottery funding.

The Wildlife Trust for Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire has been awarded a £662,800 grant to transform seven disconnected wildlife areas - three of which are currently closed to the public - into a new nature reserve called the Nene Wetlands.

A visitor centre is also being created next to the new shopping centre and the trust will embark on a series of activities to tempt shoppers into exploring the wildlife nearby.

[quote=Jonathan Platt, Head of HLF East Midland]"This is a highly innovative project that connects the stunning natural beauty and important wildlife of the Nene Valley with shoppers at the new Rushden Lakes centre."[/quote]

Bird song will be played on the tannoys and images from nests and trail cameras will be shown on big screens inside the centre whilst volunteers will take wildlife themed activities out to the shoppers encouraging people to see, smell, touch, listen to and even taste nature.

Theatrical performances will take place outside to raise awareness of the nature reserve and pathing will be installed so that shoppers can go for a walk whilst taking a break.

Due to the gravel extraction that took place in the 20th century, this section of the River Nene is now essential for the journeys of more than 20,000 migratory birds each year. It is known as one of the best places in the world to see thousands of overwintering birds.

Jonathan Platt, Head of HLF East Midlands, said: “This is a highly innovative project that connects the stunning natural beauty and important wildlife of the Nene Valley with shoppers at the new Rushden Lakes centre.

"With mobile apps, theatre performances, guided walks, bugs clubs and much more, we felt this project has the potential to be a pioneering example of how to engage everybody in the wonders of our natural heritage. We’re delighted to support it with money raised by National Lottery players.”