The Astley Moss nature reserve

An innovative project to restore nature in places where heavy industry ruled for more than a century has received a grant of almost £2million from HLF.

The Carbon Landscape – Restoring Great Manchester Wetlands to the Community, led by the Lancashire Wildlife Trust and 12 other partners and stakeholders, will revitalise a landscape left devastated by decades of coal mining and peat extraction.

The five-year scheme will work to restore key habitats and reconnect local people with their unique natural heritage, preserving it for future generations.

Daveen Wallis, Head of People and Wildlife at the Lancashire Wildlife Trust, said: “This project has seen local organisations come together to protect and enhance these areas. It’s fantastic to see such teamwork. With the support of HLF, we believe we can now take the project to the next level and really make a lasting impact over the next five years.”

A major regeneration programme

The major regeneration programme covers former Lancashire coalfields and mosslands and riverside environments around Wigan, Salford and Warrington, including nine Sites of Special Scientific Interest, eight local nature reserves and

nationally important habitats for species including the water vole and lapwing. The area is the only significant gap in the Merseyside to Manchester urban belt.

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A total of 22 targeted projects will work to combat threats facing the landscape, creating an integrated network of wetland habitats to support species and migration, and carrying out wildlife surveys to strengthen ecological networks and climate change resilience.

Mike Burke, Area Manager for Natural England, who chair the partnership developing and delivering the programme, said: "This is fantastic news. Not only will this project enable further important conservation work but also engage local people in ways that will enable them to maximise the benefits from these special places. The restoration of our mosslands will ensure they contribute to reinvigorating the area as a great place to live and work that attracts people and investment."

Reconnecting the community to their natural heritage

A key part of the joined-up vision for the Great Manchester Wetlands is helping to instil a sense of pride and ownership in the local community through improving limited access to the site.

A Landscape Traineeship Scheme will be created, alongside other volunteering and training opportunities. The formation of a Carbon Trail walking route will stress the important role carbon plays in the area’s creation, exploitation and restoration.

Nathan Lee, Head of HLF North West, said: “The Carbon Landscape is a pioneering project in landscape restoration and we’re delighted that, thanks to National Lottery players, we can support Lancashire Wildlife Trust to preserve these important wetlands. There are over a quarter of a million people living in wards next to this diverse landscape so we were impressed by the project’s strong vision to reconnect local people with their rich natural heritage, creating opportunities and a sense of pride in the local area.”